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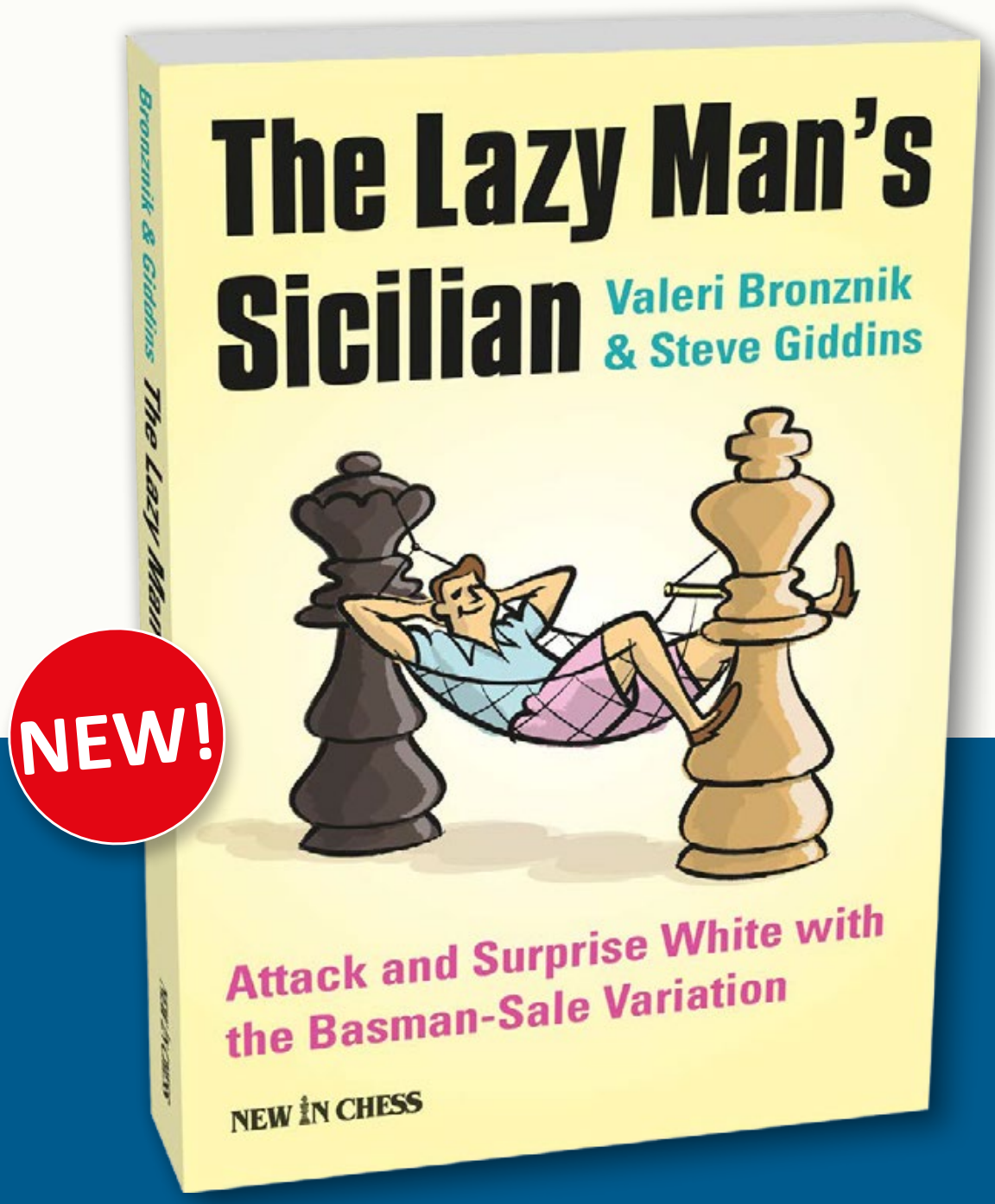
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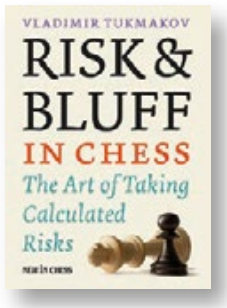

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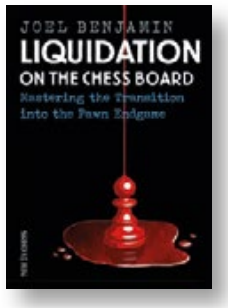

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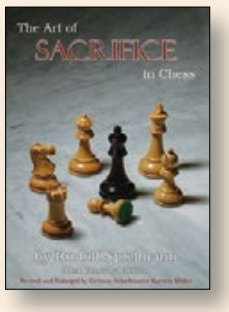

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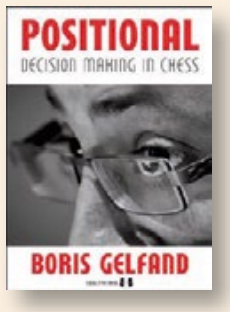

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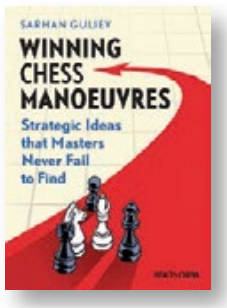

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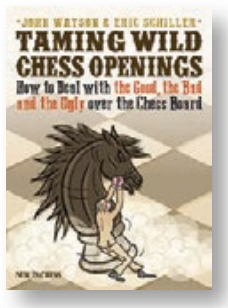

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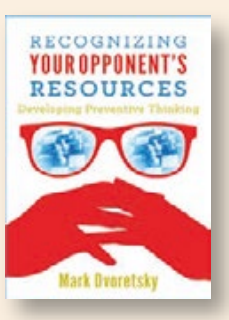

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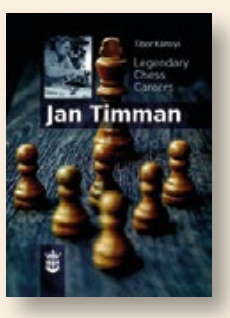

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Jan Timman
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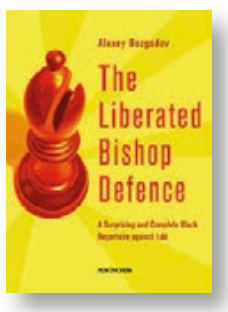
A chess program different from the rest
by ChessBase

Faster, smarter, stronger!



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6

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PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
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COVER
Ding Liren: Alina l'Ami

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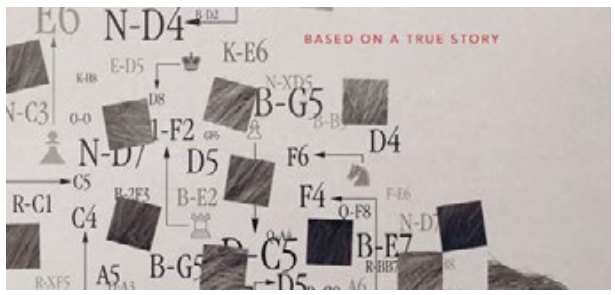
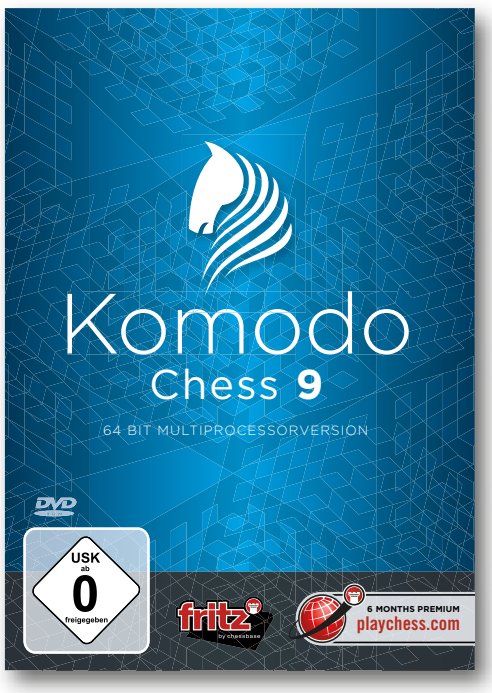


'I came up with this idea (22.♔f4) the evening before the game. While chatting with Igor, I joked that if this move appeared on the board I would be disqualified either for making an allegedly pre-arranged draw, or for playing like a computer.'
David Navara

NEW!



Faster, smarter, stronger. These three words summarize its evolution, as the new Komodo 9 runs even faster on multi-processors, uses all the software speeds gained to add more knowledge, and defeats previous number ones by unheard of scores.

Komodo is a chess program that is different from the rest. Its search makes greater use of extensions than any other top engine, which allows Komodo to often see deeper than the others, even if it is displaying a slightly lower search depth. The evaluation differs from its main rivals because it represents a blend of both automated tuning and the judgment of a grandmaster and computer expert (Larry Kaufman). Fully automated evaluations are subject to rather large sample error, and applying some chess judgment is beneficial, both in results and in the reasonableness of reported evaluations.

Komodo is primarily known for superb positional play. Of course it is also one of the the top few engines in tactical strength, but the programmers have not been willing to sacrifice positional play just to score better on tactical problem sets. All good engines are far stronger tactically than any human player, but when positional judgment is involved, top grandmasters are still superior. Therefore it makes sense to emphasize positional play rather than tactical skill; it is better to improve one's weakest point rather than just to further improve the strongest feature.

Komodo is especially useful for opening analysis, because its grandmaster programmer has always made sure that the program's evaluations agree in general with accepted theory. Komodo also excels in the evaluation of positions with material imbalance, which it handles more correctly than other top engines. The endgame of Komodo has been improved by the use of Syzygy tablebases, which provide only the most essential information to save time and memory.

Komodo Chess 9 79,90 €

Update from Komodo Chess 8 39,90 €

Opening Encyclopedia 2015

The new ChessBase Opening Encyclopedia 2015 is an excellent tool to close holes in your repertoire or to add new ideas, traps, or lines to your repertoire. There are more games and more annotated games than ever – 83,500 of the 5.3 million games are annotated. Among the top commentators are: Vishy Anand, Levon Aronian, Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana, Pavel Eljanov, Sergei Karjakin, Vladimir Kramnik, Boris Gelfand, Peter Leko, Teymour Radjabov, to name just a few! On top of that the Opening Encyclopedia 2015 offers a unique collection of all 874 ChessBase Magazine opening surveys up to CBM #164. This collection created by masters is particularly helpful for club players because these surveys give easy and fast access to the openings and their current theory. The surveys first give a written overview of the most important moves and then illustrates the ideas with annotated master games. The ChessBase Opening Encyclopedia 2015 also offers a clear and comprehensive access to opening knowledge: for each of the 500 openings covered by the international ECO standard key there is at least one opening survey, by now almost 5,800. Many of the authors are renowned opening specialists and have been analysing the development of their lines for many years, e.g. for the ChessBase Magazine. Among them are many well-known theoreticians such as Avrukh, Grivas, Krasenkow, Kritz, Kuzmin, Marin, Moskalenko, Postny, Ribli, Rogozenco, Stohl etc.

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– more than 83,500 annotated games

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The beauty beneath 0.00

The year is far from over, but no doubt Navara-Wojtaszek, created at the Biel Chess Festival, will be remembered as one of the highlights of 2015. In the *Just Checking* questionnaire, Radek Wojtaszek, who fell victim to White's stunning king march, magnanimously calls it the best game he ever played! In his comments David Navara, modest as always, writes: 'The position is just drawn, according to the computer. And so it is, but a thorough analysis revealed that it was far more interesting than just "0.00"'.

Navara's tongue-in-cheek observation is a playful poke at all of the superficial online kibitzers. Too often they moan and lament about boring draws whenever the engines don't indicate a clear advantage for one of the players, blind as they seem to be for the beauty that may loom under the surface of '0.00'. It's this beauty and the stories behind the moves that fascinate us. And our contributors.

Our reporter from Biel is none other than Maxime Vachier-Lagrave himself. Witty and sharp as ever MVL takes you behind the scenes of the key games of his favourite tournament (which he won for the fourth time).

And there's a new *Letter from China*. If you enjoyed the interviews with young stars Wei Yi and Yu Yangyi in our previous issues, then you don't want to miss what Ding Liren, the highest rated of 'The Three Musketeers', has to say.

Besides the tips and lessons incorporated in the annotated games we have some undisguised workouts for you. Test your tactics, improve your pattern recognition, study a brutal idea against the Queen's Indian or perhaps let Parimarjan guide you before you study any opening in detail.

When done, sit back and relax with a wonderful read. Meet Herman Steiner, Hollywood's chess king, who discovered that 'smart is the new sexy' long before Magnus.

And there's much more. As there will be much more next time, in our Anniversary Issue celebrating 30 years of New In Chess.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

Meet Herman Steiner, Hollywood's chess king, who discovered that 'smart is the new sexy' long before Magnus.

Top Gear

We all know that Magnus Carlsen loves to be in the driving seat (and that's one good reason why he is taking driving lessons: so as to finally be able to drive his recently acquired Tesla S P85D!). But in his last tournament, in Norway, he wasn't even in the car, let alone in the driving seat! Shortly after Norway Chess, the World Champion was invited by Volkswagen to join another double world champion, Sébastien Ogier, at the company's famous Ehra-Lessien test track in Germany. Donning a racing suit and helmet, Carlsen happily accepted to be the co-driver in the rally legend's 318 hp Volkswagen Polo WRC.
Carlsen, who is a big motorsport fan, was impressed during his spin around the track: 'It's fantastic how Sébastien masters his car and flings it around the corners,' he said. 'Chess and rallying have more in common than you would think. They both require utmost concentration and precision. And you always have to look two steps ahead.'

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NIC's Café

Reloaded

Café regulars will remember Alekhine's Gun, the New York Death/Trash Metal band that took their name from the powerful *priyome* (as the Russians would say) of doubling rooks with the queen supporting from the rear, which often exerts enormous pressure on the enemy position (see New In Chess 2010/6).

The story goes that 'Alekhine's Gun' was coined after Alexander

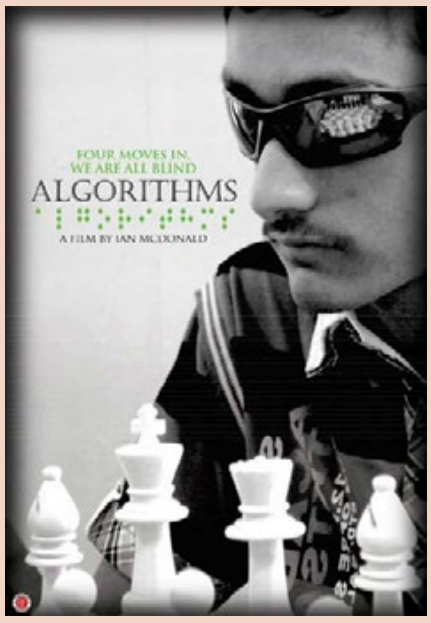
Alekhine: deadly Soviet assassin.

Alekhine used such a manoeuvre to overwhelm Aaron Nimzowitsch at San Remo in 1930. It's never been established just who exactly did the coining or in what magazine, but the name has stuck in chess lore. And now this fearful weapon has again been 'reloaded' – this time literally! *Alekhine's Gun* is the title of a new third-person shooter computer game – for PS4, Xbox One and PC – in the vein of *Hitman*, though with an historical fiction slant. Developers Maximum Games say that the scene for the game (due for general release in early November) is set in the 1960s during the height of the Cold War between America and the USSR, with Alekhine being a deadly Soviet assassin who has been recruited into the ranks of the CIA to uncover a nuclear threat. The game has 11 open levels spanning across Europe, the U.S., and Cuba, where our eponymous hitman will use stealth, assassination techniques, and an arsenal of firearms to complete his mission.

Algorithms comes home

One for everyone's viewing list is the inspiring and amazingly observational documentary *Algorithms*, which follows three visually impaired young Indians who dream of becoming chess champions. Young British filmmaker Ian McDonald and his producer wife Geetha J., were so passionate about the project that they re-mortgaged their home to finance it. Thankfully, their gamble paid off, as *Algorithms*, with the tagline 'Four Moves In, We Are All Blind', went on to receive critical acclaim and picked up numerous awards at film festivals all over the world.

McDonald says he came up with the title because 'If you are blind, you have to think algorithmically. You have to think about how you get from A to B through a set pattern. You have to think ahead. That's the case with chess. And for blind people, that's the case with everyday life. You have to think



'A very poignant film that everyone can relate to' – Vishy Anand.

ahead and know where you're going – 10 steps this way, 50 steps that way.'

Algorithms is one of those special documentaries that will make you laugh, cry and celebrate life and the spirit of endurance these youngsters display. And in early August, it was an emotional moment for the filmmakers as they brought the film back to India for its official release. McDonald and Geetha, along with some of the stars of the documentary, were joined by Vishy Anand for a special showing in Chennai. Before the screening, the five-time former World Champion was challenged to a blindfold blitz game by the champion blind chess player-turned-pioneer Charudatta Jadhav, who also features in the film. 'I congratulate Ian and Geetha on a great movie,' said Anand during his address to the audience after the screening. '*Algorithms* shows how chess is accessible to the blind and the passion they have for the game. It is also a very poignant film that everyone can relate to; the emotions are universal.'

War is over

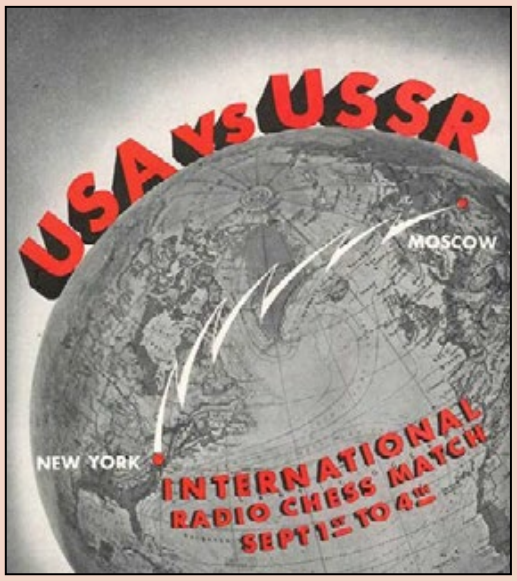
This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. One of the countless commemoration celebrations throughout the world that caught our attention was the exhibition *Battle on the Board: Chess during World War II*, which will run through January 17th, 2016, at the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis.

We've recently seen in the movies how chess masters made a cerebral contribution to the war effort, such as C.H.O'D Alexander helping Nazi Enigma codebreaker Alan Turing in *The Imitation Game*. But in *Battle on the Board*, the exhibit focuses directly on how chess played a therapeutic role for the soldiers on the battlefield, for the prisoners of war and for the seriously wounded in the hospitals.

Items include many chess sets, from the mass-produced cardboard wallet ones issued by the Red Cross – and their German equivalent – to the hand-made William Howard Chittenden's Prisoner of War set from the collection of the National Museum of Marine Corps., which had been owned by three separate prisoners in Japanese camps; only to finally be reunited with its original owner 70 years later. It also highlights how U.S. Women's Champion Gisela Gresser

made a difference with her numerous efforts for the benefit of injured veterans to promote the game.

The exhibit also touches on what happened immediately after the war; most memorably the USA vs USSR Radio Match that took place from September 1st to 4th, 1945. Remarkably, this was the very first international sporting event held after the war. Even more remarkably, it signalled a seminal moment for Soviet chess, as their 10-player team, led by future World Champions Mikhail Botvinnik and Vassily Smyslov, comprehensibly crushed the four-time Olympiad



The souvenir programme of the radio match that shook the chess world.

champions America 15½-4½, a victory that was the beginning of their decades-long domination of the chess world.

Moscow hold 'em

It's all a far cry from 1945, but poker rather than chess is surging these days in Russia. So much so that Daniel Negreanu, one of poker's biggest superstars, predicts that the Russians will soon become a world force in poker due to their training in chess. 'Playing chess,' he wrote a few years ago in a U.S. syndicated newspaper column, 'can make you a better poker player because it forces you to think several moves ahead.'

It now seems that those poker players in Russia could well be about to

Will Alexander Grischuk the poker player soon support the chess pro?

throw some of their spare chips in the general direction of supporting chess. Russian lawmakers are considering regulating online poker and some are eyeing the revenue for the Russian Chess Federation, according to a recent report from SportingNews.com.

In the past, Russia had blacklisted some of the largest online poker operators in the world, though some Russians do continue to play online poker on offshore sites. Now it has been estimated that if taxed, online poker could bring in 5 billion roubles ($146 million) per year to the government.

'Sources have indicated that an amount in the region of 12 million Swiss Francs could be distributed to Russia's Chess Federation through money collected from legislated online poker,' the report said – and the relevant legislation is apparently already in the pipeline in Moscow. Yet this proposal to benefit the Russian Chess Federation has left us at the Café pondering an interesting question: Will Alexander Grischuk now have to pay a poker tax just to support himself in chess?

Who's your Dada?

Marcel Duchamp was one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, credited with being the founding father of Dadaism and conceptual art. He was also an avid amateur chess player – and the art world was genuinely shocked when he abandoned his promising career in the 1920s to pursue what proved to be an ill-fated attempt to be a professional chess player.

When Duchamp returned to art, he continued to use chess as a theme for many of his works. In 1963 the artist famously played a game of chess in the Pasadena Art Museum against art student Eve Babitz, who agreed to play chess nude, seated in the gallery with Duchamp. This famous chess-themed work of art was recently recreated, when Robert Berman's E6 Gallery on Market Street in San Francisco put on its summer show 'Julian Wasser: Duchamp in Pasadena Revisited'.

This gathering featured a chess game, played in two versions. In the window of the gallery, the still version utilized cut-out figures (made by artist Gregg Gibbs) of chess players, Duchamp and a seated nude. However, all the interest was focused on

Marcel Duchamp (and Eve Babitz!) revisited. And again we wonder who is winning!

the flesh-and-blood versions of the figures inside. This caused such a sensation that the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that on the opening day, diners at the nearby upmarket bistro, Zuni, took a break from dinner to rush over and admire the art. ■

McFarland

"[The] classic McFarland book: a deeply researched, lovingly produced and definitive enquiry into an area of chess with a view to being the last word on the subject"—*British Chess Magazine*

José Raúl Capablanca. ***A Chess Biography.*** Miguel A. Sánchez. 2015, $55 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 563pp., 195 annotated games, 55 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7004-4. This definitive biography by a Cuban living in the U.S. uses many never before published sources and many rarely seen ones to present an exhaustive documentation of the champion's life and chess.

The Classical Era of Modern Chess. Peter J. Monté. 2014, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 616pp., 155 illustrations, glossary, appendices, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-6688-7. After tracing the birth of modern chess in Europe, this definitive study offers a monumentally comprehensive review of centuries of chess literature. The long and contentious history of rules changes, especially castling and *en passant* capturing, is scrupulously analyzed. A magisterial work.

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Samuel Lipschütz. ***A Life in Chess.*** Stephen Davies. 2015, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 408pp., 249 games, 42 illustrations, appendices, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9596-2. Gives an account of Lipschütz's chess career, life and milieu and addresses questions surrounding his first name, his periods away from New York and misconceptions concerning the American championship.

Joseph Henry Blackburne. ***A Chess Biography.*** Tim Harding. 2015, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 592pp., 1,186 games, 95 illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7473-8. During a career spanning more than 50 years, J.H. Blackburne (1841–1924) won the British Chess Championship and several international tournaments, at his peak becoming one of the world's top three chess masters.

Chess Competitions, 1971–2010. ***An Annotated International Bibliography.*** Compiled by Gino Di Felice. 2015, $49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-6207-7. Presents detailed bibliographical information about chess publications—books, bulletins and programs—covering competitions held around the world from 1971 through 2010.

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Mikhail Botvinnik. ***The Life and Games of a World Chess Champion.*** Andrew Soltis. 2014, $49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 282pp., 107 annotated games, 127 diagrams, photographs, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7337-3. His games have been studied for decades, but little has been written about the man himself. Best Book of the Year—English Chess Federation. Best Book of the Year—*Chess Journalists of America.*

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Amos Burn. ***A Chess Biography.*** Richard Forster. Softcover 2013 [hardcover 2004], $49.95 (21.6 × 27.9 cm in 2 vols), 984pp., 866 games, 859 diagrams, 209 photographs, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7726-5. "Excellent photographs"—*British Chess Federation*; "definitive...incredible achievement...four Stars"—*Chess Horizons.*

Frank Marshall, United States Chess Champion. ***A Biography with 220 Games.*** Andy Soltis. Softcover 2013 [hardcover 1993], $35 (15.2 × 22.8 cm), 400pp., diagrams, 14 photographs, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-7501-8. "'Unputdownable'...thoroughly researched and splendidly written"—*British Chess Magazine.* Book of the Year—British Chess Federation.

Capablanca. ***A Compendium of Games, Notes, Articles, Correspondence, Illustrations and Other Rare Archival Materials on the Cuban Chess Genius José Raúl Capablanca, 1888–1942.*** Edward Winter. Softcover 2011 [hardcover 1989], $35 (15.2 × 22.8 cm), 359pp., 165 games, diagrams, 26 glossy plates, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-6634-4. "Fascinating"—*British Chess Magazine.* Book of the Year—British Chess Federation.

Wei Yi's masterpiece

Re Wei Yi's brilliancy against Lazaro Bruzon (New In Chess 2015/5, p.12): The harmony of the pieces in attack and its slow burning evoked a rhythmic melody that leads me to name the game: 'Symphony to Caissa'. By the way, I ran into Nigel Short in Ghana & congratulated him on his gripping column 'Short Stories'. Keep it up.

David Erhabor
Lagos, Nigeria

Slip of the pen

It was rather surprising to see Frans Erwich refer to Hans Ree's insightful comments regarding the situation in the Ukraine (New In Chess 2015/4) as a 'slip of his pen'. There's a saying that the long memory is the most radical idea in America. I had previously believed that Europe did not share this short-sightedness, but perhaps I'm mistaken. It's worth noting that Jack Matlock Jr., the last U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, confirmed the assessment of John Mearsheimer (which Mr. Erwich apparently regards as Hans Ree's rather than Mearsheimer's, since he doesn't accuse Mearsheimer of any difficulties with control of his writing utensils) and raised the issue, which has been on my mind for decades, as to why NATO was not disbanded when the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist subsequent to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. I wonder if Mr. Erwich has any idea of the massive U.S. military presence in Europe, or why a country might feel threatened by NATO forces positioned on or near its borders.

I would encourage Mr. Erwich to listen to Noam Chomsky's very instructive lecture on the background to the crisis in the Ukraine, which clarifies that while thinking in terms of black and white – and starting with what happened ten minutes ago – may create the illusion that we understand what's going on, its connection with reality may be rather tenuous (www.democracynow.org/2015/3/2/noam.chomsky.after.dangerous.proxy.war).

It's inadvisable to rush into a combination without calculating at least a few of the possible variations, and it may be that a similar warning should apply to our perceptions of events in world politics. It's a great feeling to see that you're up a queen and a rook, but if you get mated on the next move you're bound to wonder if you hadn't overlooked something.

George Kosinski
Gibsons, BC, Canada

Wrong and insulting

In the chess world we have a great motto, 'Gens Una Sumus'. For some this means that before Caissa we all, beginners and Grandmasters, form some kind of brotherhood. For others it means a moral boundary, not to insult other players or not to make them feel upset. New In Chess is a great chess magazine, but sometimes it gets involved in extreme and insulting political writing. I am sure that there were no bad intentions, but some old authors seem to believe that they have the full right to label people and political events. In New In Chess 2015/3, Hans Ree published an absolutely wrong and insulting evaluation of Maidan in Ukraine. Maidan was not anti-Russian, but merely rose against President Yanukovich and his crooks. People simply said 'enough' to terror and corruption! Hans Ree went too far and also insulted chess players from Ukraine, and when your reader Frans Erwich tried to help him, suggesting a slip of his pen, he was rebuffed with the phrase 'a difference of opinion'.

Mr. Ree with his leftism does not care about thousands of peaceful civilians killed by anti-Ukrainian criminals in the East of Ukraine. He does not care that Grandmasters Areshchenko, Kuzubov, Shneider and Novikov became refugees and lost all their belongings and businesses. We all try to help Gena Kuzmin, who still stays in his house in Lugansk. They are all Russian-speaking Ukrainians, who, contrary to Russian propaganda, prefer to stay Ukrainians. In the Ukrainian Army, fighting with the separatists, half of the soldiers are Russian speaking.

Mr. Ree is not interested that Grandmasters Vasyl Ivanchuk, Zakhar Efimenko, Ruslan Ponomariov got draft notices to the army, where they will be the target of bandits to which he is sympathetic. Mr. Ree, would you like to see fellow chess players killed?

There was a very reasonable letter by Mr. Anthony Saidy on the subject in New In Chess 2015/5. Hopefully, Grandmasters are intelligent enough to understand this message.

GM Adrian Mikhalchishin,
Lviv, Ukraine

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Mr Biel strikes again

After months of restless travelling and dropping precious rating points **MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE** longed for familiar surroundings to start fighting his way back to the world's top 10. Returning to his second home, the French number one did what he is used to do in the Swiss town of Biel: he ate the same chocolate, took the same walks, played well and took first place. It was his fourth victory in seven years and his third in a row. The winner reports.

July is the time of year when people start thinking about their long overdue vacation. For me, it is the time to go to Biel for another Chess Festival. The 48th edition it was this year, and I set up my base camp there for the seventh time in a row. And while you may sometimes be excited by the idea of going to a new place, being in a place that you know by heart and, more importantly, where you feel at home, definitely has its perks. I could not help but notice that every decision I had to take was taken leaning on many years of previous experience, including my choice of chocolate and drinks for the game.

One might argue that things can get boring when everything is so predictable, and at a time of year when there is no football or tennis to watch, laziness might creep in. Fortunately for me, I do laziness quite well, and after many months of incessant and restless travels and tournaments I was very glad to come back to a familiar place and familiar faces! It may also have helped that I did well in Biel every time I played there, even winning the last two editions.

The format of the GMT, the Grandmaster Tournament that is the pinnacle of the Festival, was the same as last year: a six-player

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: 'Fortunately for me, I do laziness quite well.'

BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

double round-robin. The homogeneous field consisted of Michael Adams, newly-wed Radek Wojtaszek, David Navara, Pavel Eljanov, Richard Rapport and me. That field must have looked even more attractive when the invitations were sent out, for for the months leading up to the tournament we had collectively decided to shed lots of precious rating points. On the other hand, this also promised an exciting event, with all of us having time to lick our wounds and plan our revenge!

At the drawing of lots I picked number 1, just like last year, and, just like last year, I ended up not doing anything with this 'luck' in my first two white games, drawing against Pavel and Radek, mainly due to good preparation on their part.

The excitement was seen elsewhere, as Michael took the early lead by grinding down David in a nice technical game, while Richard gave us a first taste of his unorthodox preferences in the opening. In the first game it was the Chigorin, which made for a tense fight against Radek, but nothing went too far out of control. And then, in the second game, he went for this.

NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

KG 2.6 – C36
Richard Rapport
Michael Adams
Biel 2015 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.f4

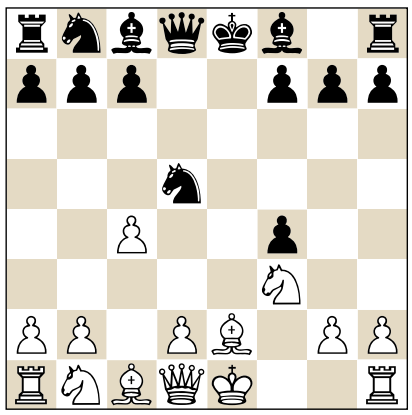
The King's Gambit would come as a surprise from almost anyone, but not when Richard is involved! Despite having been played countless times over the years, it is almost untested at the highest level, and there are still ideas worthy of attention to be dug up.

2...exf4 3.♘f3 d5 4.exd5 ♘f6 5.♗e2!?

Not the most common move and a

pretty harmless-looking one. But appearances can be deceptive and Richard has a specific idea in mind.

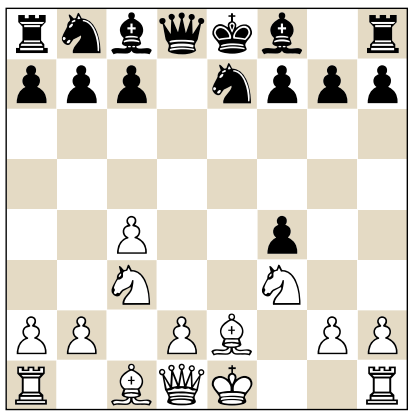
5...♘xd5 6.c4



6...♘e7 After 6...♘f6 7.d4 c5 (7...♗b4+ 8.♘c3) 8.♗xf4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♗c5 10.♘b5 ♕xd1+ 11.♔xd1 ♘a6 12.a3! the knight on b5 proves to be a precious asset.

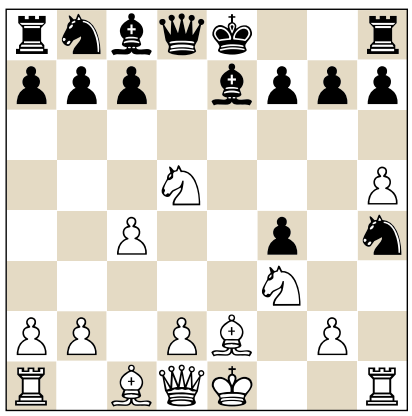
6...♘b6!? is seldom played and leads to interesting play after 7.d4 (or maybe the cunning 7.0-0 g5 8.♖e1! ♘c6 9.d4 g4 10.c5!?) 7...g5! 8.h4 g4 9.♘e5.

7.♘c3!?



The start of a very interesting idea that will be revealed in a few moves.

7...♘g6 8.h4 ♗e7 9.h5 ♘h4 10.♘d5!



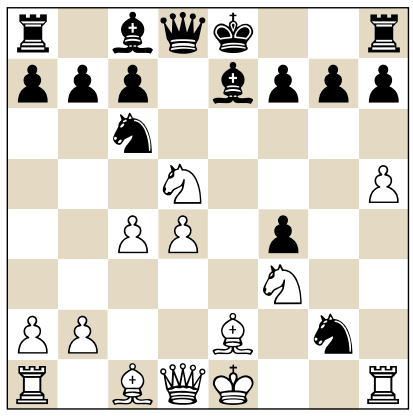
BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

Richard Rapport's opening experiments and original brainwaves began to fire back after an unfortunate loss against David Navara in Round 3. The 19-year-old Hungarian collapsed in the second half, losing all his games.

The point of delaying d4. The play now becomes sharper than ever.

10...♘c6 10...♘xf3+ 11.♗xf3 ♗h4+ 12.♔f1 doesn't look like achieving much for Black, but things are getting interesting again after 12...0-0 13.d4 c6! 14.♘c7? (14.♖xh4 ♕xh4 15.♘c7 ♘a6 16.♘xa8 ♗f5 17.♗d2 should be OK for Black) 14...♗g3!! 15.♘xa8 ♖e8, and White is in big trouble.

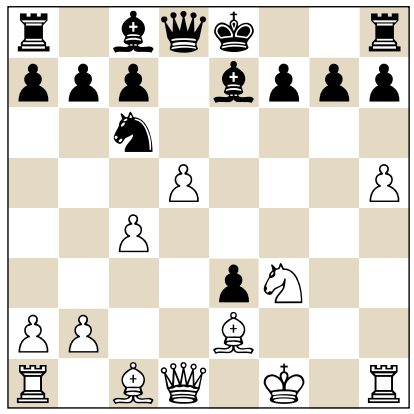
11.d4 ♘xg2+



12.♔f1

12.♔f2 loses an important tempo after 12...♘e3 13.♘xe3 fxe3+ 14.♗xe3 ♗f6, but things are not too bad, as the rook on a1 would be very happy to get to g1 in one move!

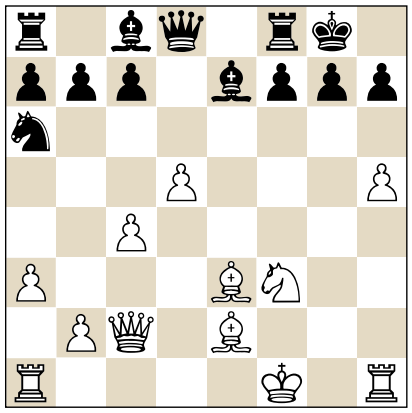
12...♘e3+ 13.♘xe3 fxe3 14.d5



When looking at the position as an amused kibitzer, I actually thought White's position was extremely promising and was impressed by Richard's concept. The computer is not that impressed, though, but it was still worth a try.

14...♘b4 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♗xe3 0-0 17.♕c2

I think Richard's preparation ended around here. If White's rook could get to g1, his position would be overwhelming, but even here there are numerous ways to develop a dangerous-looking attack against the black king.



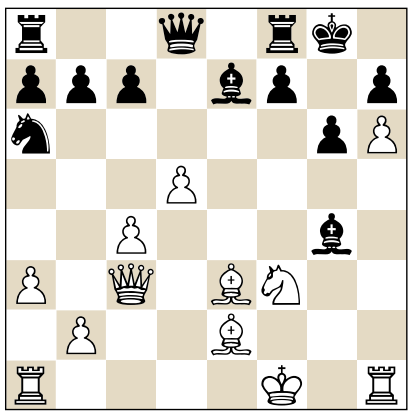
17...♗g4

A principled option, but it gives White the opportunity to implement a nice idea!

The soundest move may be 17...♕d6, when 18.♔f2 (18.♗d3 ♕g3!) 18...♖e8 19.♗d3 h6 20.♖ag1 ♗f6 21.b4 ♖xe3!? 22.♔xe3 c5 looks unclear.

On the other hand, 17...♖e8?! 18.♗d3! h6 19.♕g2 spells trouble.

18.h6 g6 19.♕c3

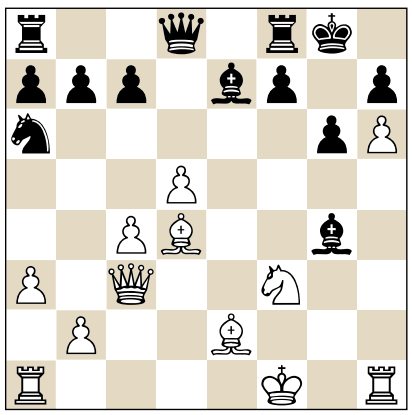


19...♗f6?!

19...f6 20.c5 ♕d7 21.♔f2 looks extremely awkward for Black. But it might have been better than losing a few tempi outright.

20.♗d4 ♗e7

20...♗xd4? 21.♕xd4 highlights one of the inconveniences of going ...♗g4 earlier.



21.c5?!

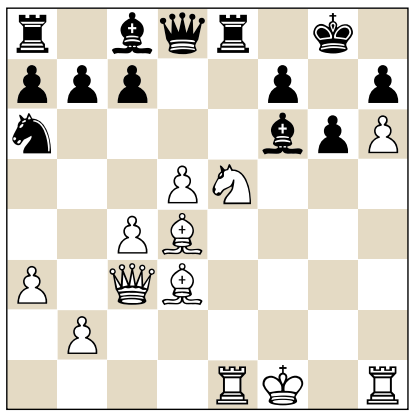
The materialistic 21.♗xa7?! f6 22.♗d4 ♘c5 would be a crime against the power of the initiative and the King's Gambit. Here every tempo counts!

Probably the most dangerous was the cool-headed 21.♖e1!. Black is struggling to come up with a good option:

– 21...♕d7! 22.♔g2 ♕f5 23.♗d1! ♗d6 24.♗f2 f6 25.c5, and Black is definitely in trouble after 25...♗xf3+ 26.♗xf3 ♗e5 27.♕c4.

– After 21...♖e8 22.♘e5 ♗c8 (22...♗xe2+ 23.♖xe2, with a lethal attack) 23.♗d3 ♗f6

> 'The King's Gambit would come as a surprise from almost anyone, but not when Richard is involved!'

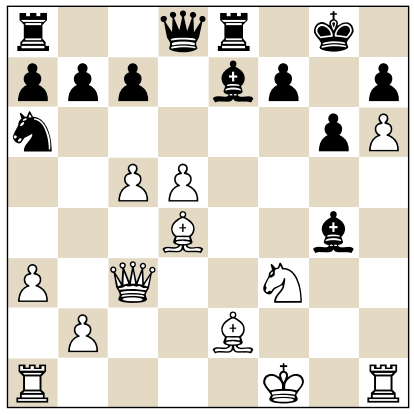


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White can strike with 24.♘xf7!!. This is not the only way to develop the attack but by far the most efficient one. For instance: 24...♖xe1+ 25.♔xe1 ♕e8+ 26.♔d2 ♗xd4 27.♕xd4 ♕xf7 28.♖f1! ♕e7 29.♖e1 ♕g5+ (29...♕f7 30.♖e8+ ♕xe8 31.♕g7 mate) 30.♔c3 ♕xh6 31.♖e8+ ♔f7 32.♕e5 ♕h4 33.♖h8, winning.

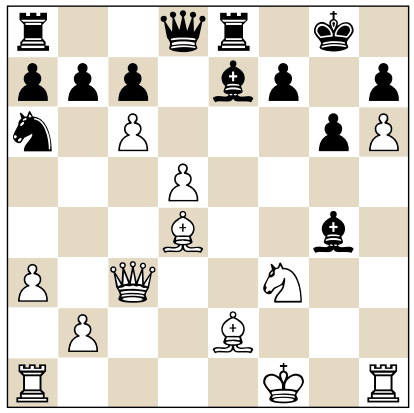
21...♖e8! This looks both forced and very strong.

21...♕xd5? loses to 22.♗f2 f6 23.♗c4 ♗xf3 24.♖d1!.



22.c6

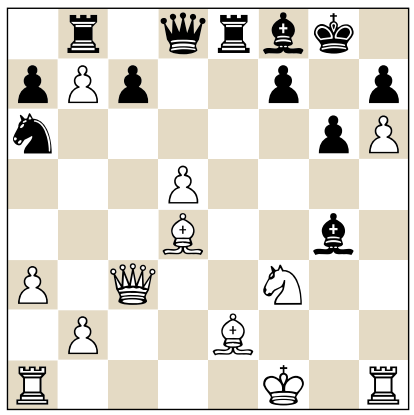
22.♖d1! was still giving good compensation for the pawn: 22...♗f8 23.b4! ♕xd5 24.♗g7 ♕e4 25.♖h2 ♗e7 26.♗h8 ♗f8 27.♗g7, and the game should end in a draw.



22...♗f8!? An extremely natural move to reverse the situation.

22...b5! was much more powerful, though, as 23.♗xb5? runs into 23...♕xd5.

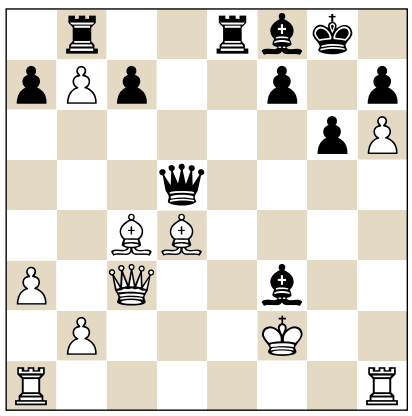
23.cxb7 ♖b8



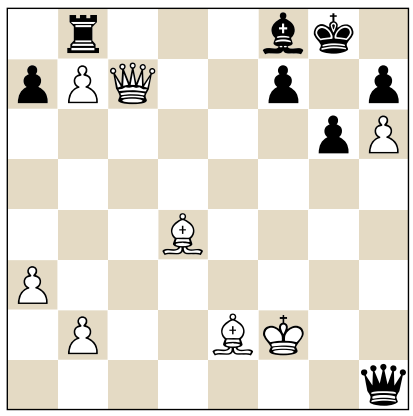
BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

The cast of the 2015 Biel GMT: Radek Wojtaszek, David Navara, Richard Rapport, Pavel Eljanov, Mickey Adams and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

24.♗xa6?!
A saner option seemed 24.♗g7 ♗c5 25.♗d4 ♗f8 26.♗g7, as White's position now gets out of control.
24...♕xd5 25.♔f2 ♗xf3 26.♗c4
Richard was definitely counting on this resource. Things are still extremely sharp, but Black can't be in any trouble.



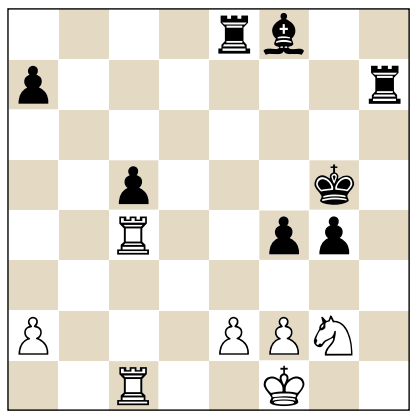
26...♖e2+ Natural but wrong if you're looking to win.
Best was 26...♕e4! 27.♖ae1 (27.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 28.♖ae1? ♗e2) 27...♕f4! 28.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 29.♕xf3 ♖xe1 30.♖xe1 c5, and White is definitely in some trouble in the ensuing endgame.
27.♗xe2 ♗xh1 28.♖xh1! ♕xh1
29.♕xc7 Much to my bewilderment, and probably to Michael's too, Black has no way to avoid a perpetual.



29...♕h4+ 29...♖xb7? 30.♕e5 ♕h4+ 31.♔g2 f6 32.♗c4+ is actually in White's favour!
30.♔f1 ♕h1+ 31.♔f2 ♕h4+ 32.♔f1 ♕h1+ 33.♔f2 Draw.
A very interesting game to follow. I have to add that while Richard's ideas are often a bit too loose to work well, they can be really interesting, and if he manages to get his ideas to work more often, he will most likely manage to turn round his recent setbacks and might be even more fun to follow!

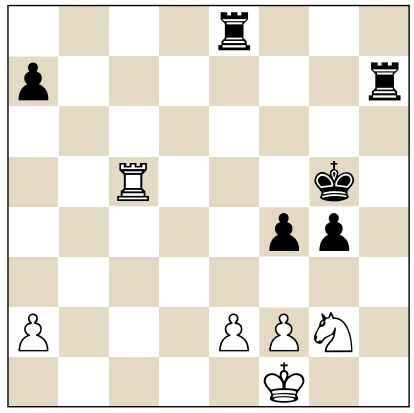
■ ■ ■

In the meantime David recovered from his first-round loss with a neat tactic against Pavel.



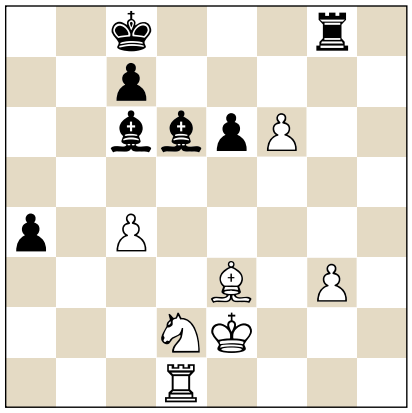
Eljanov-Navara
Biel 2015 (2)
position after 42...♖h7

43.♖xc5+?
Necessary was 43.♔g1, and while things aren't looking too rosy, a tenacious defence would have every chance of being successful.
43...♗xc5 44.♖xc5+



44...♖e5!
Missed by Pavel: a deviation to create a lethal double threat. If White could keep his rook on the board, he would be absolutely fine, but now the a2-pawn will inevitably fall, clearing the way for Black's own a-pawn.
45.♖xe5+ ♔f6
And White resigned.

Round 3 was one of the first turning points in the tournament, with all games decided. First, Radek displayed excellent preparation and prevailed with a very pure technical performance against Pavel. Richard had another stab at the Chigorin. Everything was going fine until...

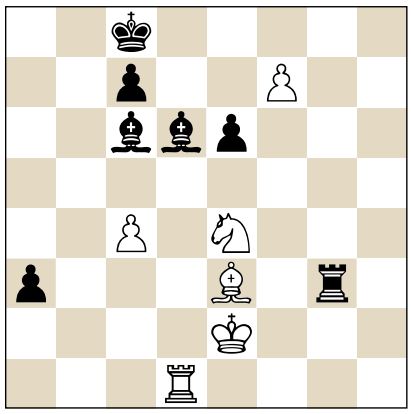


Navara-Rapport
Biel 2015 (3)
position after 38.♔e2

38...a3? Black is clearly better after 38...♖xg3 39.f7 ♗f8, and then it might have been a completely different tournament for Richard!

39.f7 ♖xg3?! 40.♘e4

This was probably the resource he had missed.

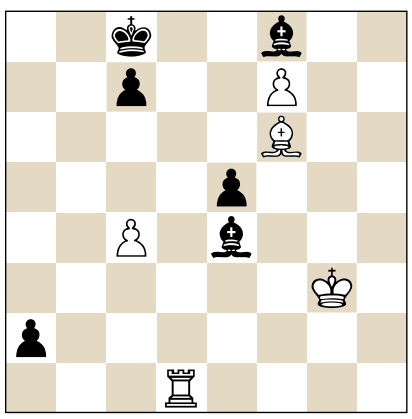


40...♖g2+?!

And to add to his misery there was a not so obvious decision to take on that fateful move 40.

It's still a draw after 40...♗xe4! 41.♖xd6 ♖f3 42.♖xe6 a2 43.♗d4 ♖xf7 44.♖xe4 ♖h7! 45.♖f4 ♖e7+ 46.♔f2 ♖d7.

41.♔f1 ♗f8 42.♔xg2 ♗xe4+ 43.♔g3 e5 44.♗g5 a2 45.♗f6



45...♗d3?

And here he misses 45...c5!. Not an obvious defence, but it could have been found by a process of elimination. Suddenly Black gets enough counterplay against both White's pawns, as f7 is not queening yet: 46.♗xe5 ♗c2 47.♖c1 (47.♖d2 ♗b3) 47...♗g6 48.♖f1 ♔d7 49.♖f2 ♔e6 50.♗a1 ♗d3! 51.♖xa2 ♗xc4 52.♖a7 ♔f5! and Black is in time to make a draw.

46.♗xe5 ♗xc4 47.♗f6

Now it's all over.

47...a1♕ 48.♖d8+

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Knowing how much chess players thrive on confidence, this game may have had a devastating effect on the young Hungarian, as the remainder of the tournament seems to suggest.

> 'I must admit that I was more amused than impressed by David's concept while the show was in progress, which just shows what poor taste I have at times.'

In my own game from Round 3, I again showed remarkable continuity compared to last year, winning my game with black against Michael, in the exact same line I had chosen last year!

Thus emerged a pack of three leaders, with two of them playing each other in Round 4, a game that will be remembered for a long time because it featured one of the most amazing king marches of all time – although I must admit that I was more amused than impressed by David's concept while the show was in progress, which just shows what poor taste I have at times. Let the king walk, let the artist comment!

NOTES BY
David Navara

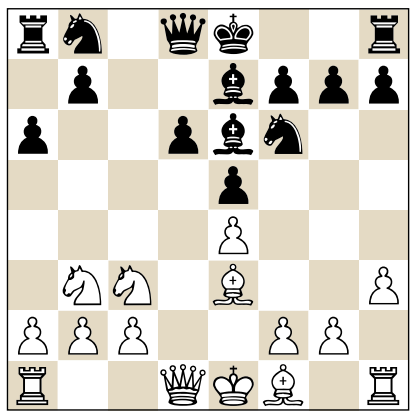
SI 14.8 – B90
David Navara
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Biel 2015 (4)

Radek (short for Radoslaw) is my friend and a team colleague in three different leagues. Still, I was ready to play for the win. This game was annotated by many strong players for various websites. I will regularly refer to their analyses.

1.e4

Igor Stohl, who was my second at the event, suggested that I could surprise my opponent. In our previous encounters I had only played 1.d4 and 1.c4.

1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.h3 ♗e7



9.g4

This is not the critical option, but I was not willing to compete with Radek in the main lines. Not only does he know the theory well, but he also has a great feel for the resulting

positions. As far as I know, no one has demonstrated a way to White's advantage in this line, so why should I try?

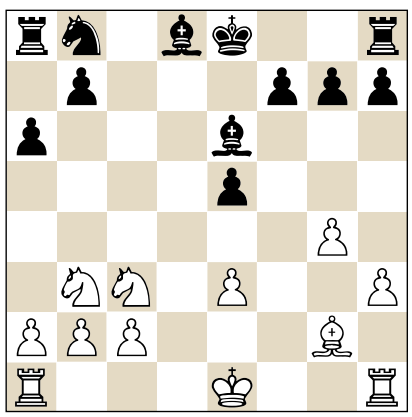
The main moves are 9.♕f3 and 9.f4.

9...d5!

Black goes for the most principled reaction.

10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♗g2 ♘xe3 12.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 13.fxe3

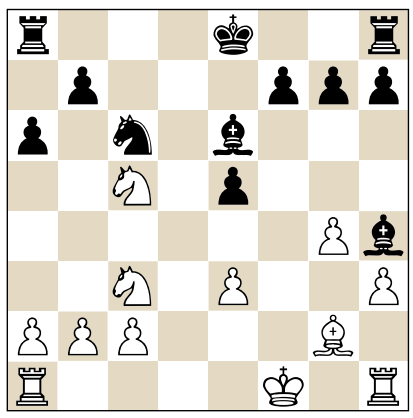
White's better development compensates for the bishop pair.



13...♗h4+ 14.♔f1 ♘c6

Another option was 14...♖a7 15.♗d5 0-0 16.♔e2 ♗c8, with chances for both sides.

15.♘c5



15...♗c4+

It seems that 15...0-0 suffices for equality as well. I had somehow missed it during my preparation. The game Aharon-Kuzubov, Baku 2014, saw 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖d1 ♗c8 and eventually finished in a draw.

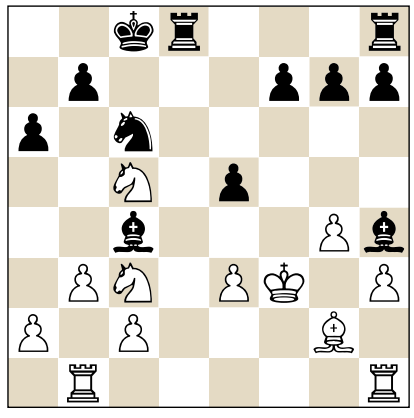
16.♔g1 0-0-0! 17.b3 ♗g5!

Radek had probably seen this idea some time before. The position is just drawn, according to the computer. And so it is, but a thorough analysis revealed that it was far more interesting than just '0.00'!

18.♖e1 ♗h4 19.♖b1

First White improves his rook's position. From b1 it can come into play after b3xc4.

19...♗g5 20.♔f2 ♗h4+ 21.♔f3

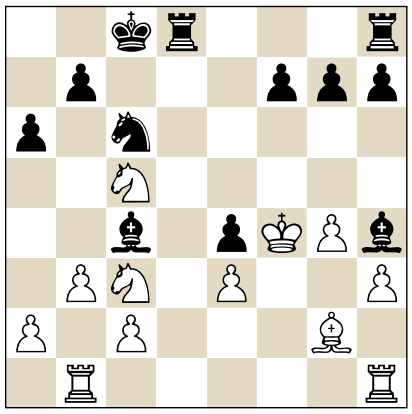


21...e4+!

There was nothing much wrong with 21...♗d5+ 22.♘xd5 ♖xd5 23.♘e4

♖hd8, but White's knight on e4 looks very strong. After 24.♗f1!? Black needs to be a bit careful.

22.♔f4?!

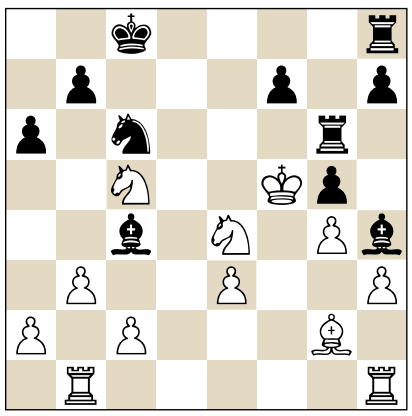


I came up with this idea the evening before the game. While chatting with Igor, I joked that if this move appeared on the board I would be disqualified either for making an allegedly pre-arranged draw, or for playing like a computer. This way of playing is fairly risky and White needs to be careful and well prepared in order not to get mated. I probably would not have played like this in a team competition.

22.♘3xe4 ♘e5+ 23.♔f4 ♘g6+ leads to a move repetition.

22...g5+ Black had numerous other options as well.

After 22...♖d6 White has to be careful: 23.♘3xe4! g5+ 24.♔f5 ♖g6



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

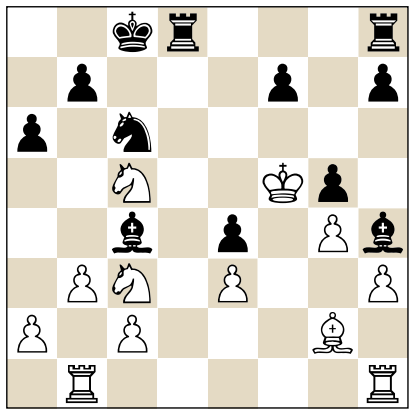
25.♘c3! (25.bxc4? ♖e8 gives Black mating threats, e.g. 26.♘d3?! ♖e5+! 27.♘xe5 ♘e7 mate) 25...♖e8 26.♗xc6 ♖xc6 27.bxc4 ♖xc5+ 28.♘d5 ♖xe3 29.♔f6, with double-edged play.

This was still my preparation!

23.♔f5

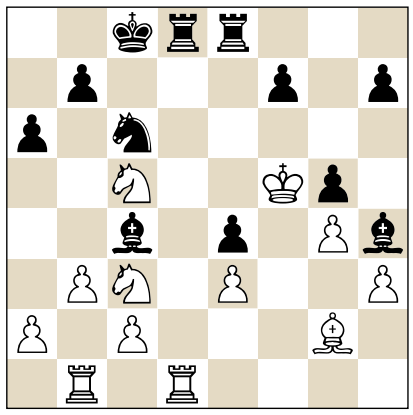
BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

David Navara makes a move in his brilliant game against Radek Wojtaszek. 'The position is just drawn, according to the computer. And so it is, but a thorough analysis revealed that it was far more interesting than just '0.00' !'



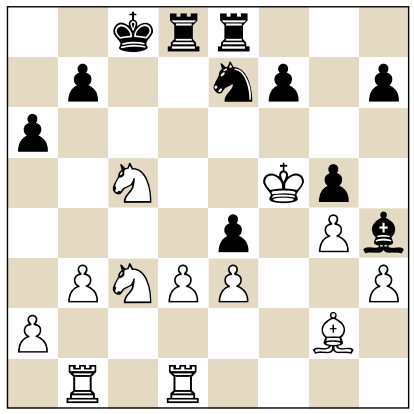
23...♖he8 24.♖hd1!

After 24.bxc4? ♖d6 the threat of 25...♖e5 mate would have decided the game, e.g. 25.♘d3 ♖ee6! (Stohl).



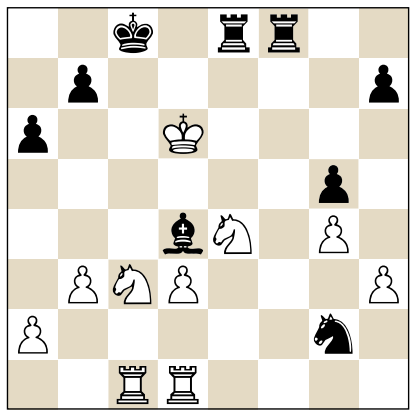
24...♖e5+?!

Grandmaster Knaak from ChessBase informed me that 24...♗d3!! was very strong. Indeed, Black seems to be winning here: 25.cxd3 (25.♘xd3? ♖d6 26.♘xe4 ♖e5+! 27.♘xe5 ♘e7 mate) 25...♘e7+!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♔f6 (no better is 26.♔xe4 ♘d5+ 27.♔f5 ♘xe3+ 28.♔f6 ♘xg2 29.♖bc1 ♗f2! 30.♘5e4 ♗d4+! 31.♔xf7 ♖f8+ 32.♔e7 ♖de8+ 33.♔d6

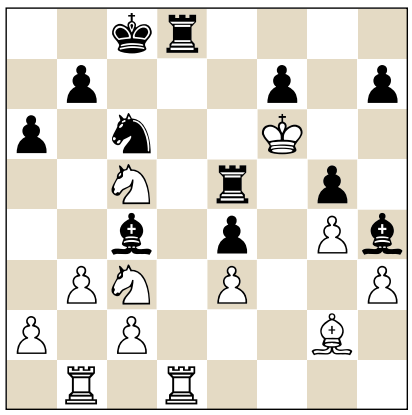


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

33...♔d8!, and the white king is in trouble. Its retreat 34.♔d5 leads to a technically lost position after 34...♗xc3 35.♘xc3 ♘e3+) 26...♘g8+! 27.♔g7 (27.♔f5 ♖d6, winning)

27...♗g3! 28.♔xh7 ♘e7! 29.♔g7 ♗e5+ 30.♔xf7 ♘c6 with a decisive attack. This implies that my move 22.♔f4 was wrong.

25.♔f6



25...♖g8!?

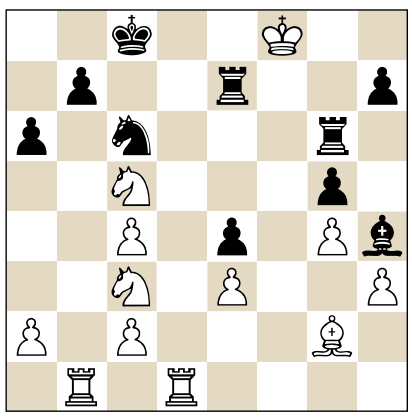
This move was new for me. I supposed that it might be inaccurate or wrong, as the computer had not suggested it, but I was mistaken.

I had 'only' analysed 25...♖xc5 26.♖xd8+ (Radek was afraid of 26.♘a4 ♖cd5 27.♘b6+ ♔c7 28.♘xd5+ ♗xd5 29.c4, but 29...♖d6+! 30.♔g7 ♗e6 31.♖xd6 ♔xd6 32.♗xe4 ♗f2 gives Black a pleasant position. Still, this was hard to determine over the board) 26...♘xd8 27.bxc4 ♖xc4 28.♖b3 ♗e1 29.♘d5! ♖xc2 30.♗xe4 ♖xa2 31.♗xh7, with a complex position.

26.bxc4

There was a nice line: 26.♗xe4? ♖xe4 27.♘3xe4?! ♖g6+ 28.♔f5 ♗e6+ 29.♘xe6 fxe6 mate. Still, I somehow disliked it. Any guesses why?

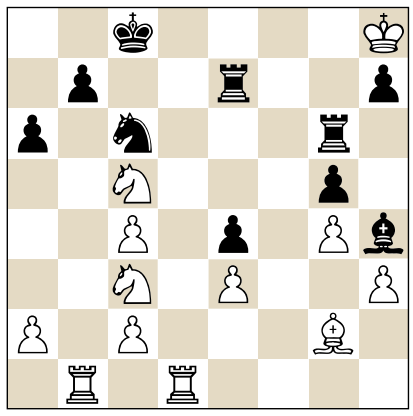
26...♖g6+ 27.♔xf7 ♖e7+ 28.♔f8



28...♖f6+?!

As numerous annotators and engines have pointed out, 28...♖eg7!! would have led to equality, e.g. 29.♘e6 ♖g8+ 30.♔f7 ♘e5+ 31.♔e7 ♘c6+ 32.♔d6 ♖e8!. Needless to say, I was blissfully unaware of it.

29.♔g8 ♖g6+ 30.♔h8



One does not often see White's king on such a strange square in the middlegame. It might seem strange, but Black cannot even force a perpetual!

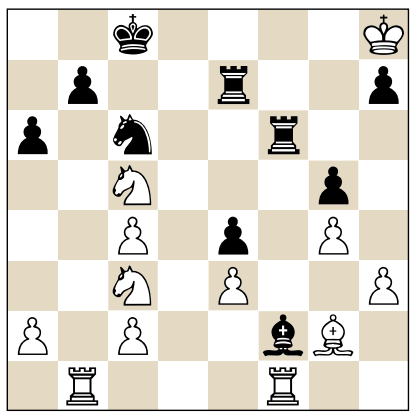
30...♖f6

30...♗g3? would be refuted by 31.♖d5 ♗e5+ 32.♖xe5 ♘xe5 33.♖xb7! and White wins.

31.♖f1

We both saw the following amusing line: 31.♘d7?! ♖ff7 32.♔g8 ♖g7+ 33.♔h8 ♖gf7.

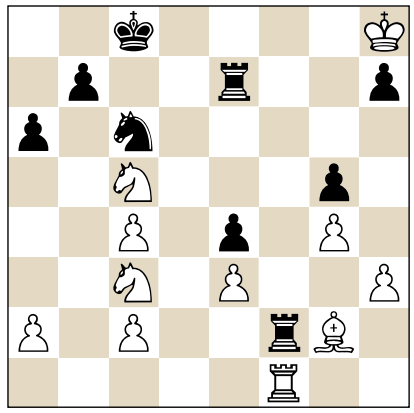
31...♗f2



32.♖xf2!

I also considered 32.♘e6, but it looked far too unclear to me. The text is indeed slightly stronger, as 32...♖e8+! (Houdini) 33.♔g7 ♖g6+ 34.♔xh7 ♖gxe6 gives Black equality. One sample line is 35.♖xf2 ♖8e7+ 36.♔g8 ♖g6+ 37.♔f8 ♖h7 38.♗xe4 ♖h8+ 39.♔f7 ♘e5+ 40.♔e7 ♖h7+ 41.♔e8 ♖h8+, when 42.♖f8?? is not recommended.

32...♖xf2 33.♖f1

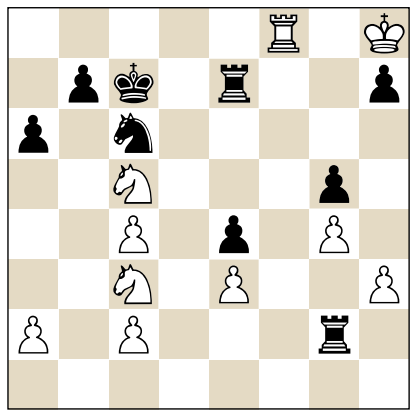


33...♖xg2?

Stronger was 33...♖e8+! as all the annotators pointed out. After 34.♔xh7 ♖xg2 35.♘3xe4 White only has a slight edge.

34.♖f8+ ♔c7! Black correctly chooses an active approach.

34...♘d8 was easy to refute: 35.♘d5 ♖e5 (or 35...♖f7 36.♖g8!, and wins) 36.♘a4!, and wins.

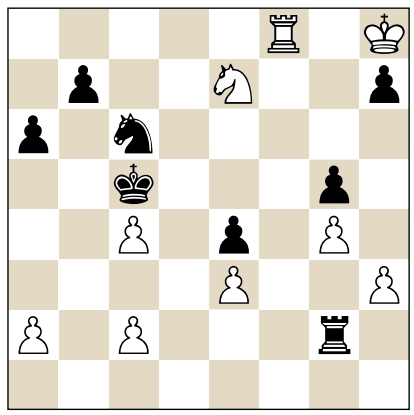


35.♘d5+?

I rejected 35.♘5xe4! on account of 35...♔d7. In fact, White has a huge advantage here: 36.♘f6+! ♔e6 37.♘cd5 ♖f7 38.♖e8+ ♘e7?! 39.♘g8!?.

35...♔d6 36.♘xe7 ♔xc5!

Suddenly the position is equal again.



37.♖f5+ After 37.♘xc6 bxc6 38.♔xh7 ♖h2!? 39.♖f5+ ♔xc4

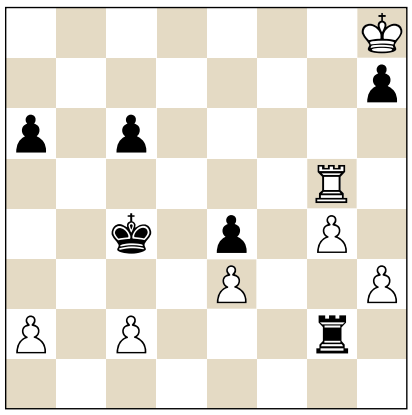
Tournament director Yannick Pelletier, his wife (and press chief) Marie Boyard and, 'the novelty of this year's edition', their son Daniel.

BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

40.♖xg5 ♖xh3+ 41.♖h5 ♖xe3 42.g5 ♖e2! 43.g6 ♖xc2 44.g7 ♖g2 the e-pawn saves the day for Black.

Grandmasters Stohl and Tukhaev provided extensive analysis of 37.♘f5 ♖xc2 38.♔xh7 ♖xa2, eventually claiming equality in a complex position.

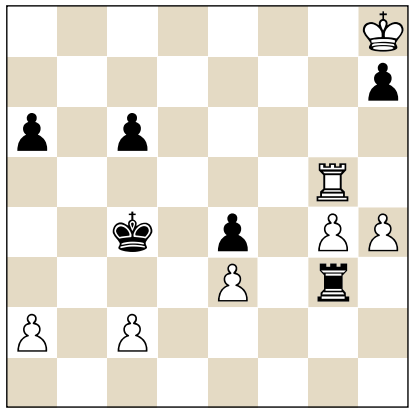
37...♔xc4 38.♘xc6 bxc6 39.♖xg5



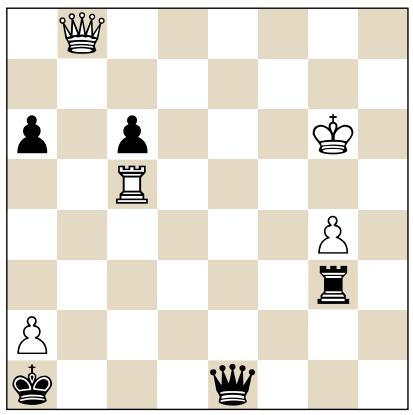
39...♖g3

Although it is no mistake, I was still pleasantly surprised to see this move. After 39...♖xc2 40.♔xh7 ♔d3 41.♖h5 ♔xe3 42.g5 Black can force a draw by 42...♖c5!.

40.h4

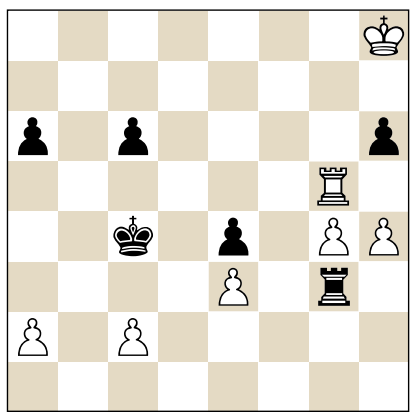


40...h6? Radek had little time left. 40...♖xe3 led to a draw, e.g. 41.♔xh7 ♖g3 42.h5 e3 43.h6 ♔c3! 44.♔g6 e2 45.h7 e1♕ 46.h8♕+ ♔xc2 47.♖c5+ ♔b1 48.♕b8+ ♔a1



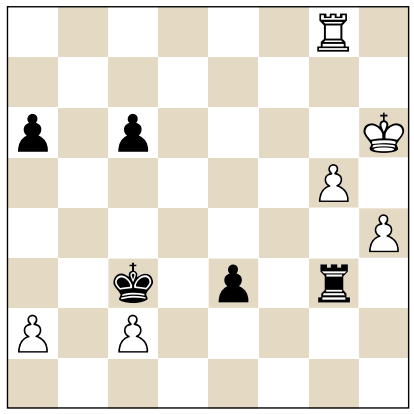
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

49.♕h8+ ♔b1, and White has no advantage. I even came to this position in my calculations. It would have been a funny end of the game with two impressive king journeys!



41.♖g6!

I spent 50 minutes on this move, choosing between the text and 41.♖g8. It looks very logical to put the rook on g6, unless you realize that it has no time to capture the pawns c6 and h6 if Black doesn't play ...♔c4-c3. I rejected 41.♖g8? ♖xe3 to rule out the option of ...h6-h5, which was not that dangerous: 42.♔h7 (42.♔g7 h5!) 42...♖g3! (I was concerned about 42...h5? but 43.g5 ♖h3 44.g6 ♖xh4 45.g7 ♖g4 46.♖e8 ♔d4 47.♖e6! is easily winning) 43.♔xh6 e3 44.g5 ♔c3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

That's the difference with 41.♖g8?. The modest c6-pawn saves the day for Black.

45.h5 ♔xc2 46.♖e8 ♔d2 47.g6 e2 48.♖xe2+ ♔xe2 49.♔g7 c5 50.h6 c4 51.h7 ♖h3, with a draw.

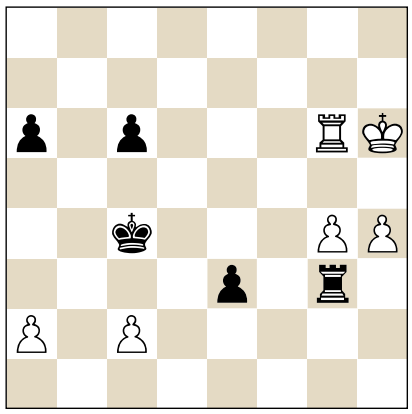
41...♖xe3 42.♔g7! Here 42.♔h7!? was equivalent, as 42...h5? again fails to 43.g5!? ♔d5 44.c4+!, and Black's counterplay comes too late.

After 42.♖xh6? ♖g3 43.g5 ♖g4!? Black gets a pawn and half a point: 44.g6 e3 45.g7 e2 46.♖e6 ♖xh4+ 47.♔g8 ♖h2 48.♔f7 ♖f2+ 49.♔e7 ♖g2.

42...♖g3

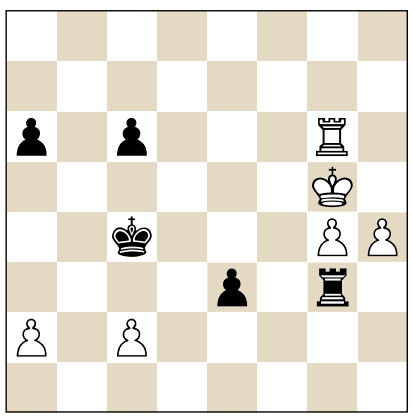
42...♖f3!? 43.♔xh6 e3 44.g5 ♖f4 45.h5! ♖e4 46.♖xc6+ transposes to the line 44.g5! from the game, which is winning for White.

43.♔xh6 e3



44.♔g5? The return of the king was not necessary.

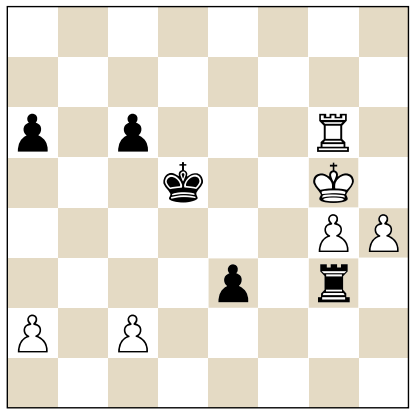
I discarded 44.g5! in view of 44...♖g4 45.h5 ♖e4 46.♖xc6+ ♔d5, but White is still winning: 47.♖b6 e2 48.♖b1 e1♕ 49.♖xe1 ♖xe1 50.g6! ♔e6 51.♔h7! ♖g1 52.g7 ♔f7 53.h6, followed by the march of the c-pawn, as pointed out by GM Tukhaev.



44...♔d5?

Rook endings tend to be difficult and this one was no exception.

Black had a saving option here: 44...♔c3! 45.♖xc6+ (45.h5 c5! also leads to a draw, as the c5-pawn becomes dangerous; 45.♔f4 ♖h3 46.♖xc6+ ♔d2 47.h5 e2 48.♖e6 e1♕ is also equal, as pointed by GM Tukhaev and IM Kriebel) 45...♔d2 46.h5 e2 47.♖d6+ ♔xc2 48.♖e6 ♔d2 49.h6 e1♕ 50.♖xe1 ♔xe1 51.h7 ♖h3 52.♔g6 ♔e2 53.g5 ♔f3.



45.♔f4?

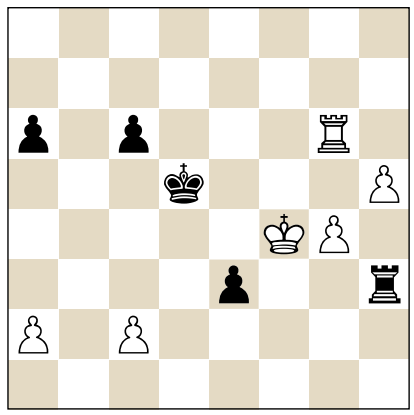
Doctor Tarrasch would have surely played 45.♖g8! (behind the passed pawn), but I cannot imagine him taking his king to h8: 45...♖g2 (45...♔e4 46.h5 e2 47.h6! – I had missed either this or White's next move – 47...♖e3 48.h7! e1♕ 49.h8♕ and White wins – GM Kavalek) 46.♔f4 ♖xc2 47.♔xe3 ♖xa2 48.h5, and White should be winning (Kriebel).

> 'Doctor Tarrasch would have surely played 45.♖g8! (behind the passed pawn), but I cannot imagine him taking his king on h8.'

45...♖h3?

We both saw 45...e2! 46.c4+ but evaluated it incorrectly: 46...♔xc4! (46...♔d4? 47.♖e6 ♖h3 48.♖xe2 ♖xh4 is lost for Black in several ways, of which 49.♔f5! ♔xc4 50.g5 is probably the quickest one) 47.♖xc6+ ♔d5! (I underestimated this move – 47...♔d3? 48.♖d6+!, and wins) 48.♖c1 ♖a3. During the game I relied on 49.♔f5?? (missing both 49.h5 and 49.♖e1, draw) 49...♖f3+! 50.♔g6 ♖f1, and Black wins.

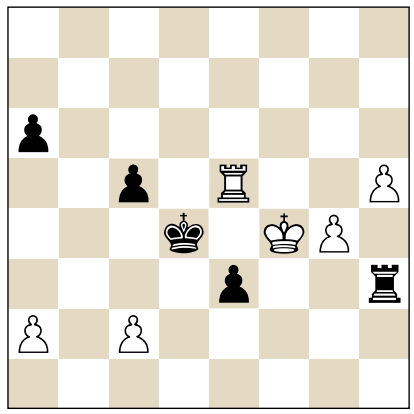
46.h5



46...c5

When playing 45...♖h3, Radek missed one important detail: 46...e2 47.♖g5+! ♔d4 48.♖e5, and White wins, for example 48...♖h2 49.♖e8 ♔c3 50.♔g3.

47.♖g5+ ♔d4 48.♖e5



And here Black resigned.

After 48...♖h2 49.♖xe3 ♖xc2 50.♖h3 ♖f2+ 51.♔g5 c4 52.h6 White promotes with check.

I would like to express my appreciation for Radek's behaviour. After the game he joined the live analysis in the commentary room and praised my play.

■ ■ ■

Meanwhile, your reporter drew with Richard, and Pavel won after Michael let things get out of control in time-trouble. Round 5 was the only round featuring only draws (meaning that I finally stopped imitating my 2014

performance). At halftime David was in the sole lead with 3½ points, while I was in second place, but not feeling quite sharp, mostly due to my unsuccessful preparation as White.

In Round 6, the leading pack got together again. Michael won convincingly against David and Radek did the same against Richard, while I let Pavel escape from an overwhelming position (which in a way compensated for the totally winning position that Pavel failed to convert the previous round against Richard).

On the rest day, there was a choice between a relaxed visit to Saint Peter's island, where the famous French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau spent a few years of his life, or, for the bravest of us all, the blitz tournament.

And then it was time for the last four games, which would be all-decisive, given how close the standings were. Michael won against Richard and was suddenly back in the chase. And while David and Pavel drew, a crucial encounter was in progress. Now, before I let Radek commentate on this game, I have to stress how disappointed I am at how abruptly he chose to end our peace treaty in classical games, which had been lasting for a whole nine years and 11 games. Continuity, has he really never heard of this word? ☺

BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

Having spent the free day preparing 'something more serious', Radek Wojtaszek abruptly ended the peace treaty with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave that had lasted 9 years and 11 classical games.

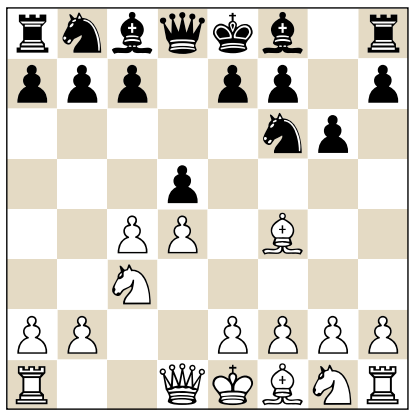
NOTES BY
Radoslaw Wojtaszek

GI 3.11 – D83
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Biel 2015 (7)

Last year in Biel I had to face Maxime with White the day after I'd lost an almost 7-hour game against Anish Giri. Having no idea what to do against the Grünfeld, I played quite a harmless line and our game finished in a draw quite quickly.

This year I was lucky to have a free day before our game, so I was determined to prepare something more serious.

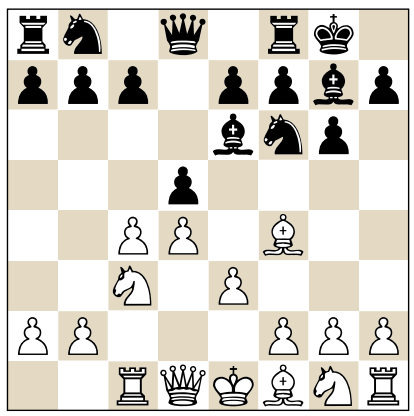
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f4



Not the most topical line, but GM Gajewski, who was helping me during the tournament, convinced me that it was worth a try.

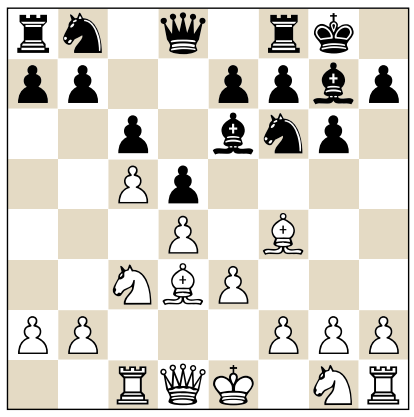
4...♗g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♖c1 ♗e6

That's what everyone is doing nowadays. I must admit I was not really playing for an advantage out of the opening. My main hope was that this structure might not suit Maxime. Instead of his usual sharp Grünfeld stuff, this one is more similar to some positional ...a6 Slav lines.



7.c5 It's well known that White has nothing after 7.♕b3, because of 7...c5! 8.♕xb7 ♕b6 9.♕xb6 axb6, and practice has shown that Black has at least enough compensation.

7...c6 8.♗d3



8...♗g4 This is not a mistake, of course, although Grischuk's choice

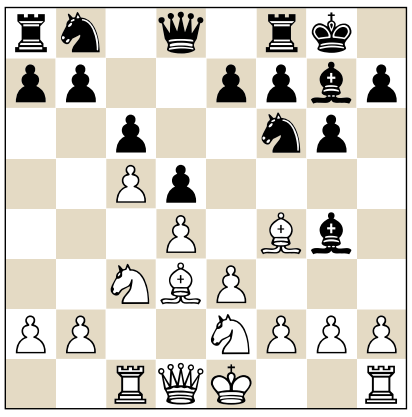
against Gelfand looks much more convincing. He played 8...♗c8!, and I must admit that in my preparation I was not really able to find any reaction which would make me happy. Black has the simple plan of ...♘fd7 and ...e5. In the end I'd probably have played the strange-looking move which had been played in a game Kovalenko-Grigoriants: 9.♗g5!? ♘fd7, and just as in that game I would have improved with 10.♘ge2!?.

After 9.♘f3 ♗g4! Black will exchange his only bad piece. Gelfand played normal looking moves: 9.h3 ♘fd7! 10.♘f3 e5 11.dxe5 ♘xc5 12.♗b1 ♘bd7, but it quickly became clear that it is White who has to be careful not to end up worse.

9.♘ge2

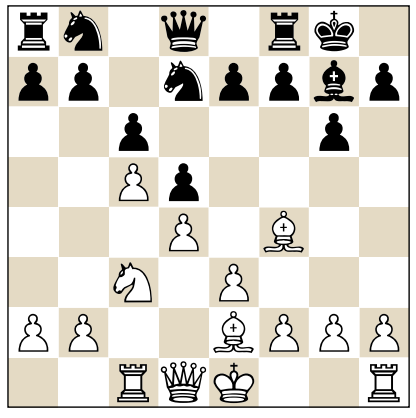
It was also possible to start with 9.f3, but since I was not afraid of Black capturing on e2, I decided to give Maxime an extra option. After 9.f3 9...♗c8 10.♘ge2 ♘bd7 (on 10...♘fd7 White goes 11.♗g5!, again this useful resource to stop ...e5 for a while) 11.0-0 e5 12.♗g5 ♖e8 would transpose to our game with no real alternatives on the way.

9.♕c2?! was played in the game Wang Yue-Carlsen, but Black was more than fine after the simple 9...♘fd7, with the usual idea of playing ...e5.



9...♖e8

9...♗xe2!? was also possible, but I liked the character of the position and still thought that White might be a bit better after 10.♗xe2 ♘fd7 (this position I saw briefly in my preparation, and since I had spotted that White has two promising options, I decided not to determine which one I should play until during the game. After 10...♘bd7 11.♗g3! ♖e8 12.f4! I would finally stop ...e5 for good!).



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And now:

– 11.♗g5! ♗f6 12.♗h6 ♗g7 (12...♖e8 13.♕b3! – much stronger than the immediate 13.f4?, which runs into

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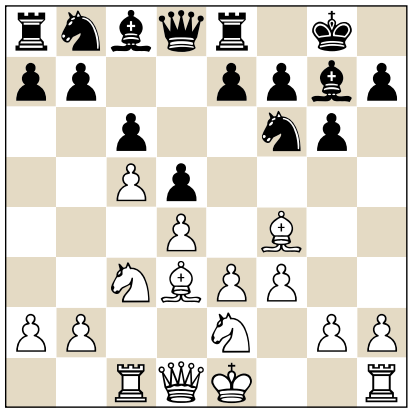
13...e5! 14.fxe5 ♗xe5 – 13...♕c7 14.f4, and we already know that this structure is good for White) 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.h4!?, and I could at least pretend that I had chances to create some play on the kingside.

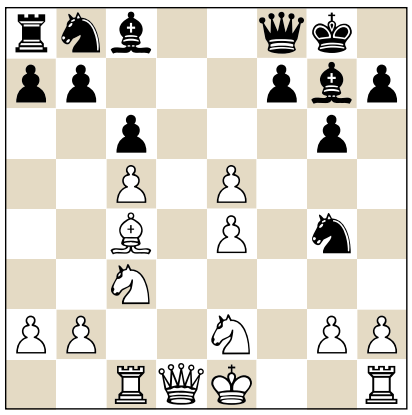
– 11.e4 was my early favourite, but in fact it doesn't offer anything special: 11...dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘f6! 13.♘c3 ♘d5 14.♗g3 ♘c7! (the key move, which solves Black's problems) 15.♕b3 (15.0-0 ♘e6 16.d5 cxd5 17.♕xd5 ♘c6, and Black has nothing to complain about) 15...b6!. This leads to a forced draw after 16.cxb6 axb6 17.♕xb6 ♘e6 18.♕b7 ♕a5 19.♕xe7 ♖a7 20.♕h4 ♘xd4 21.0-0 ♘xe2+ 22.♘xe2 ♕xa2.

10.f3 ♗c8



11.0-0 Before the game I had also considered playing more sharply, but then decided that against such a tactically gifted player as Maxime it wouldn't make much sense, especially since I was happy with the alternative that happened in the game.

But here there is the option 11.e4!? dxe4 12.fxe4 e5! (12...♘h5 13.♗e3 e5 14.d5 ♕h4+ 15.♗f2 ♕g5 16.0-0 looks much better for White) 13.♗xe5 ♖xe5 14.dxe5 ♘g4 15.♗c4 ♕f8!



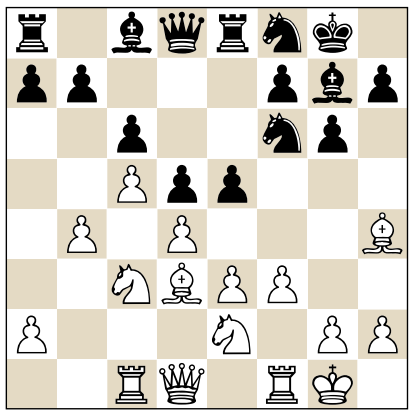
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

> 'Normally I would write that the white king's position is impressive, but it's not even close to what David Navara did against me!'

and I wasn't sure if objectively White can play for an advantage here. And I definitely didn't like it from a practical point of view, as my king is weak and my pawns are falling: 16.e6!. This would lead to a really crazy position: 16...fxe6 (16...♗xe6?! 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♕d6! ♕f2+ 19.♔d2 ♗h6+ 20.♔c2, and White is clearly better) 17.♕d6 ♕f2+ 18.♔d2 ♗h6+ 19.♔c2 ♘e3+ 20.♔d3 ♘xc4 21.♔xc4. Normally I would write that the white king's position is impressive, but it's not even close to what David Navara did against me! 21...♗xc1 22.♘xc1 ♘d7 23.♕xe6+ ♔g7 24.♕e7+ ♔h6, and most likely this would end in a draw after 25.♘d3 ♕xg2 26.♕h4+ ♔g7 27.♕e7+.

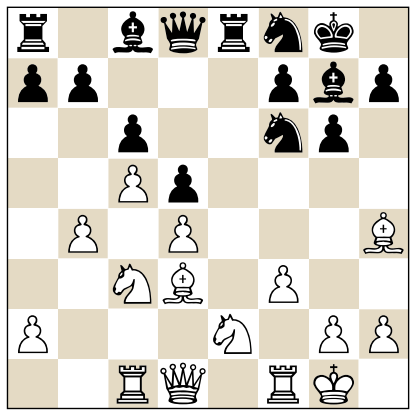
11...♘bd7 12.♗g5 e5 13.b4 ♘f8 14.♗h4

After 10.f3 this position was more or less inevitable. It was also the main position in my preparation.



14...♗h6?

This looks tempting, but in fact it's a mistake from which Black will never recover. Correct was 14...exd4! 15.exd4, and now there is a choice:



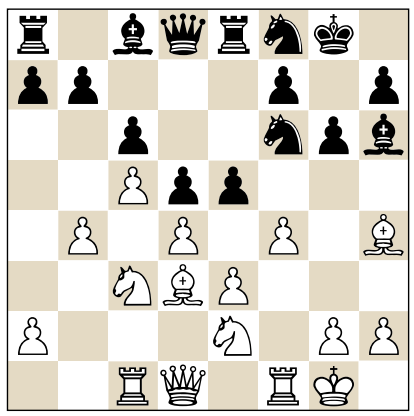
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

– 15...♗d7!? 16.b5 ♕a5, which would be safer and also good enough. White has more space, but the weakness on d4 may start hurting in the long run.

– More dynamic is 15...b5, but Black would have to watch out for 16.a4 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘xb5 cxb5 19.♗xb5, and I have to say that even with engines running I couldn't properly analyse this position.

I should point out that the immediate 15...♘e6 would run into 16.f4!, and White turns out to be better on both flanks.

15.f4!



15...e4?!

This gives me really easy play on the queenside without any real compensation for Black, but it was already difficult to find an alternative.

Funnily enough, while preparing for the game the last line I checked was after 15.f4!, which really confused me, as it was about 1.30 p.m. (the rounds started at 2 p.m.). At first the engines were very excited about Black's chances, but after

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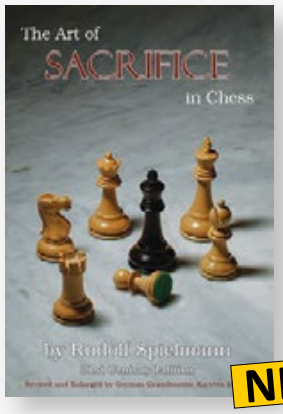

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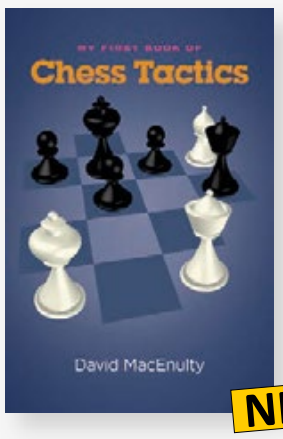

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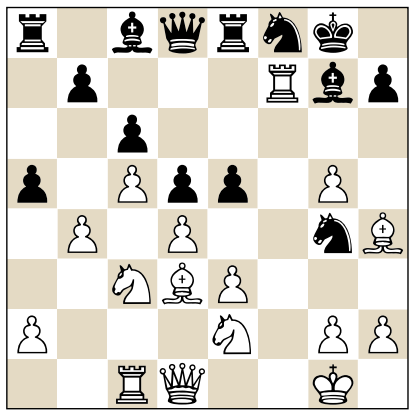
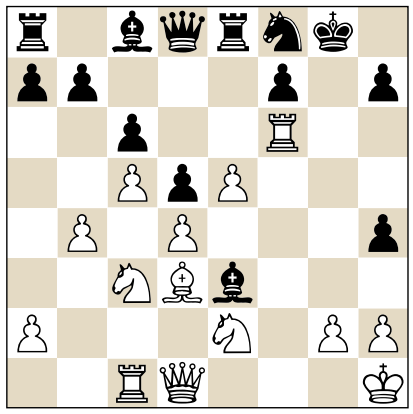
some time they realized it doesn't work: 15...g5?! 16.fxe5! (16.fxg5 ♘g4 would lead to a crazy position after 17.♖f6! – 17.♕d2 ♗xg5 18.♗xg5 ♕xg5 is at least slightly better for Black – 17...♗g7 – 17...♘xf6? doesn't work in view of 18.gxh6! – 18.♖xf7, and here the best for Black, according to the engines, is 18...a5.



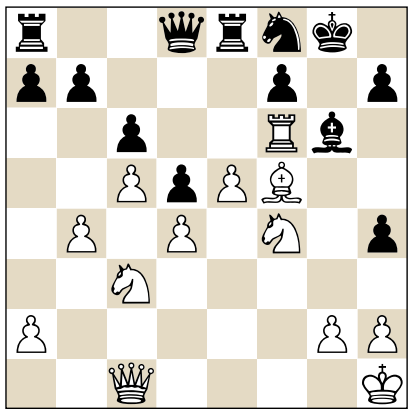
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

When I saw this move, I thought: it's been enough, I better stop, since it's impossible that this will happen. After the game I was just curious why such a ridiculous move should be played, and it turned out that the point becomes clear in the line 19.b5 e4 20.♘xe4?! ♘xe3 21.♕b3 a4!, when without ...a4, Black would be hopeless, while now it's White who is in big trouble) 16...gxh4 17.♖xf6 ♗xe3+ 18.♔h1,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

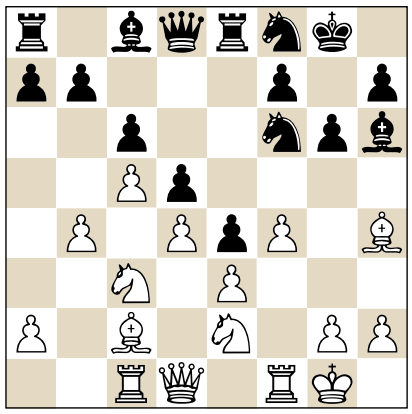
and here it turns out that White's compensation for the exchange is more than sufficient: 18...♗g4 19.♕e1 (19.♖b1? would be a mistake: 19...♗xd4 20.♗xh7+ ♘xh7 21.♕xd4 ♘xf6 22.exf6 ♗xe2 23.♕f4 ♗d3 24.♕h6 ♕xf6! – I thought it was a nice trick to show. It's also the only defence: 25.♕xf6 ♗xb1, with an advantage for Black) 19...♗xc1 20.♕xc1 ♗h5 21.♘f4 ♗g6 22.♗f5!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

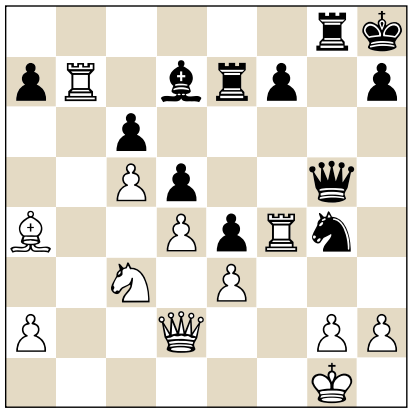
The key point, because after 22...♘d7 23.♗xd7 ♕xd7 24.h3! Black is just hopeless and the h4-pawn will fall. 15...exd4 16.exd4 is not the same as before, because the knight on f6 is pinned: 16...♗g7 17.f5, and again, White is better on both flanks.

16.♗c2



16...♗g7

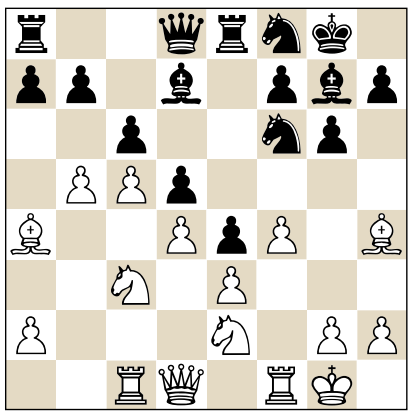
I'm pretty sure that Maxime's first intention was to play 16...g5!?, but this doesn't work: 17.♗xg5 ♗xg5 18.fxg5 ♘g4 19.♕d2 ♕xg5 20.♘f4, and Black is just too late to organize counterplay around White's king. The following sample line was, in fact, the one I briefly considered during the game: 20...♘g6 21.b5 ♗d7 22.♗a4 ♖e7 23.bxc6 bxc6 24.♖b1, and here I stopped, because I thought I should have something. And this time I was actually right: 24...♘xf4 25.♖xf4 ♔h8 26.♖b7 ♖g8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

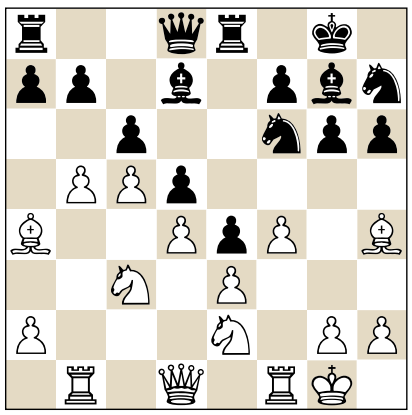
27.♗xc6! – a nice trick – 27...♘xe3 (27...♗xc6 28.♖xg4!) 28.♖f2! ♗xc6 29.♖xe7 ♕xe7 30.♕xe3 ♖g6 31.♘e2!, with a clear advantage.

17.b5 ♗d7 18.♗a4



18...♕c8

During the game I considered all kinds of active tries for Black, like 18...h6 19.♖b1 ♘8h7, and here the engine shows a really beautiful idea to stop Black's counterplay:

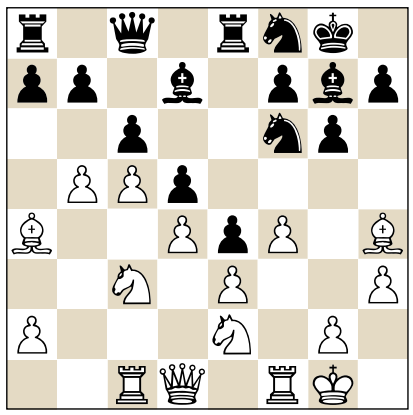


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.f5! (I only considered 20.h3 g5 21.fxg5 hxg5 22.♗g3 g4 23.h4 ♘h5 24.♕e1, which also yields White a nice advantage) 20...gxf5 21.♘g3 ♕c8 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.h3!, and Black is completely paralyzed because after 23...♘f8 24.♗xf6! ♗xf6 25.♘xd5! cxd5 26.♗xd7 ♕xd7 27.♘xf5 White's attack is just too strong to handle.

19.h3!

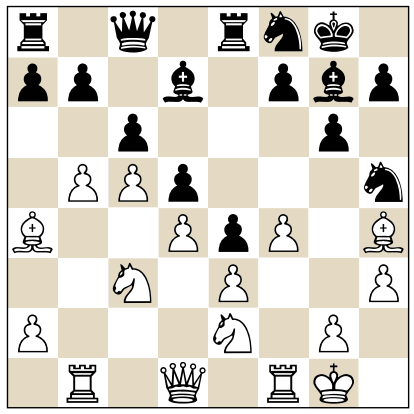
During the game I was very proud to make this move. I had to stop ...♘g4, but it was psychologically not easy to play h3 right after Maxime had played ...♕c8, threatening all kinds of sacrifices on h3. To be honest, after the game I realized that the lines are not that difficult to calculate after all. Note that after 19.♗xf6? ♗xf6 20.♖b1 ♗d8 White has no advantage at all.



19...♘h5

19...♗xh3? doesn't work, as 20.gxh3 ♕xh3 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.bxc6 ♕xe3+ 23.♔g2 is just an easy win.

20.♖b1



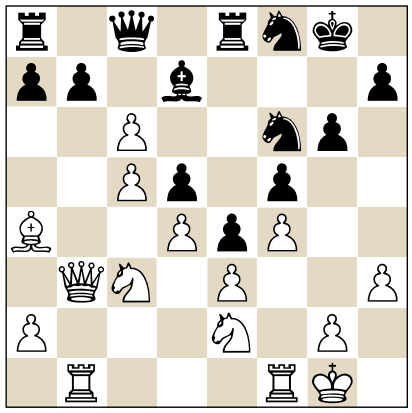
20...f5

Now it's clear that I have a huge advantage, with no counterplay for Black. No good either is 20...♗xh3 21.bxc6 bxc6 (or 21...♕g4 22.♘g3 ♕xh4 23.♘xh5 ♗g4 24.♕e1 ♕xh5 25.cxb7, and White is winning) 22.gxh3 ♕xh3 23.♗xc6 ♕xh4 24.♕e1 ♕g4+ 25.♔h2, and Black's attack is over.

21.♕b3 ♗f6 22.♗xf6 ♘xf6 23.bxc6

BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

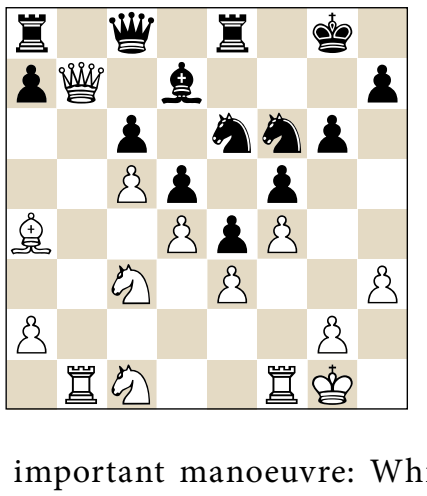
While the stage was the privilege of the participants in the GMT, the spaceous floor of the Biel Convention Centre was more than big enough for the Master tournament (won by Emil Sutovsky) and other side events.



23...bxc6

Instead, 23...♗xc6 24.♕c2 and doubling rooks on the b-file would also guarantee a serious advantage.

24.♕b7 ♘e6 25.♘c1!



An important manoeuvre: White goes to a5, and now it's clear that with so many pieces hovering around the c6-pawn, it will be very difficult to defend.

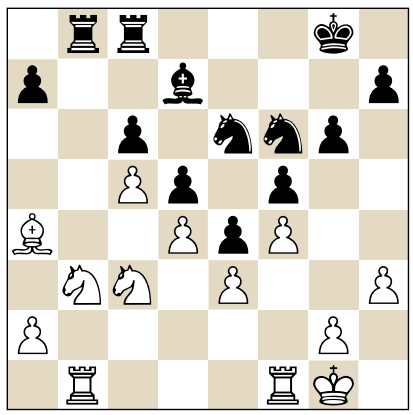
25...♖b8!?

An interesting try to find some counterplay, even though it is objectively incorrect. Passive defending with 25...♘d8 would probably not be enough either: 26.♕xc8 ♗xc8 27.♘b3. Here I had in fact missed 27...♗a6!? (I only saw 27...a5 28.♖b2 ♖a7 29.♖fb1, and eventually I will move my bishop from a4 and bring the knight to b6. Practically speaking, I considered this position as close to winning for me) 28.♖fe1 ♗d3 29.♖b2 a5, but fortunately for me I would have had 30.g4! and the usual stuff in the endgame: trying to find a second weakness to win the game.

26.♕xc8

I thought it was very pragmatic just to exchange queens and keep a large advantage. On the other hand, if I had taken the pawn, Black would not have had counterplay either: 26.♕xa7!? ♖xb1 27.♘xb1 g5 28.fxg5 ♘xg5 29.♘e2 ♔h8 30.♘f4 ♖g8 31.♘c3, and I don't see how Black can create any active play.

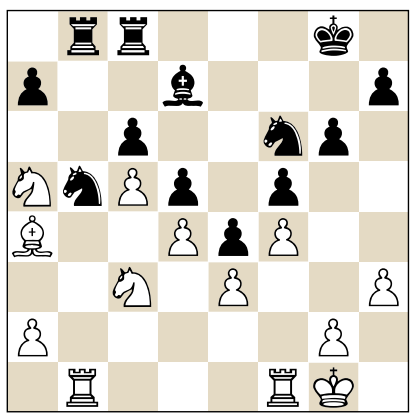
26...♖exc8 27.♘b3



27...♘c7?!

Again searching for counterplay. Probably not the best idea, but it's hard to criticize, as passive defending also looks very sad: 27...♔f7 28.♘a5 ♘d8 29.a3 ♖xb1 30.♖xb1 h6 (30...♔e8 31.♘a2 ♘g8 32.♘b4 ♘e7 33.♘a6) 31.♘a2 g5 32.g3 g4 33.hxg4! ♘xg4 34.♖b3.

28.♘a5 ♘b5



29.♘e2?!

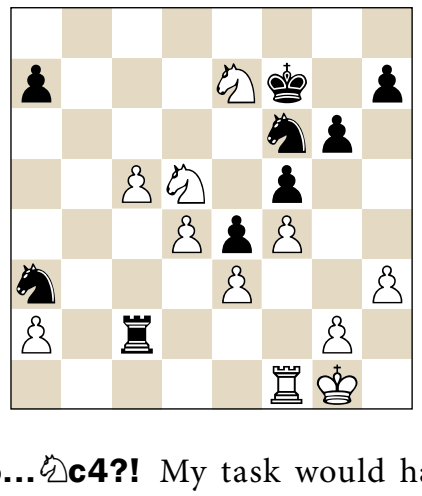
During the game I thought this was very clever, but in fact simply taking on b5 was much easier: 29.♗xb5 cxb5 30.♖b3! (and thanks to the fact that ...♖a3 is impossible (compared to the 30.♖b2 line), White is much better. For some reason I only considered 30.♖b2 a6 31.♖fb1 ♔f8 32.a4 ♖a8 33.axb5 axb5 34.♘b7, when after 34...♖a3! Black's counterplay is very annoying) 30...a6 31.♖fb1 ♖a8 32.a4 ♔f8 33.axb5 axb5 34.♘b7 ♖cb8 35.♘d6 ♔e7 36.♘dxb5, with a healthy extra pawn.

29...♘a3

I had underestimated this, thinking that there was no real compensation for the pawn. The idea behind 29.♘e2 was 29...♔f7 30.♖b3! ♔e7 31.♖fb1 a6 32.♖b4, followed by ♗d1 and a4.

30.♖xb8 ♖xb8 31.♗xc6 ♗xc6 32.♘xc6 ♖b2 33.♘c3 ♖c2 34.♘e7+ ♔f7 35.♘cxd5

To be honest, I didn't expect any more problems, and things did proceed pretty smoothly, but there still turned out to be some hidden venom in the position.

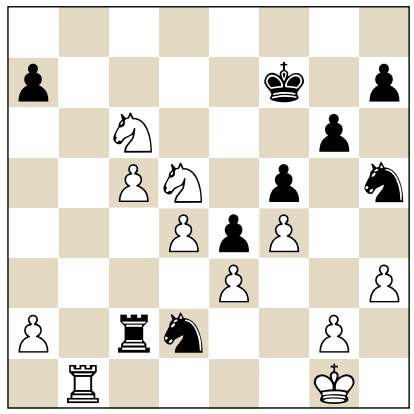


35...♘c4?! My task would have been considerably tougher after 35...♘xd5!? 36.♘xd5, and now:

– 36...♖c4 37.♘c7! ♔e7 38.♘a6! ♖a4 (38...♔d7 39.d5!) 39.♘b8!. All of this would have been required for me to score the whole point.

– after 36...♔e6, 37.♘b4! is the only way (37.♘c7+?! ♔d7 38.♘a6 ♘c4) 37...♖b2 38.d5+! ♔f6 39.d6 ♖xb4 40.c6 ♘b5 41.♖d1 ♘xd6 42.♖xd6+, winning.

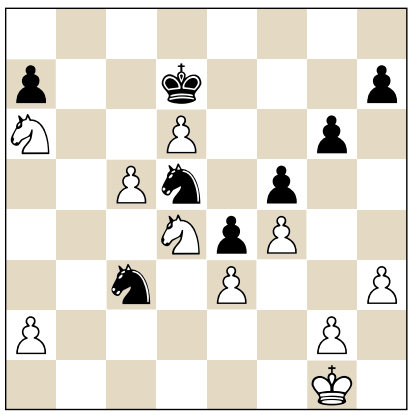
36.♖b1! ♘h5 37.♘c6 ♘d2



38.♘cb4

Good enough to win, but I could have finished the game immediately with 38.♘e5+ ♔g7 39.♖b7+ ♔h6 40.g4!.

38...♘xb1 39.♘xc2 ♔e6 40.♘c7+ ♔d7 41.♘d5 ♔e6 42.♘db4 ♘f6 43.d5+! ♔d7 44.d6 ♘c3 45.♘d4 ♘fd5 46.♘a6



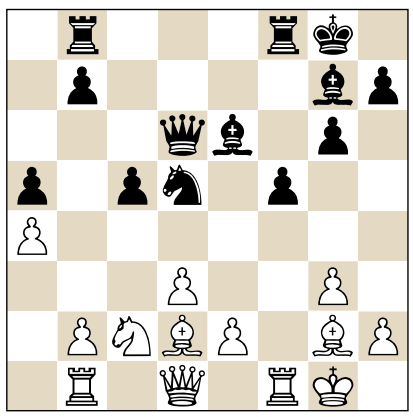
Black resigned.

It was a nice win for me, especially since it was my first against Maxime in a classical game. It also gave me high hopes of winning the tournament, but we all know that stopping Maxime from winning the Biel tournament seems just impossible!

■ ■ ■

The standings got scrambled again in Round 8, when I managed to get a little pressure out of the opening with White, a feeling that I had pretty much lost hope to revive. Under this pressure Michael uncharacteristically collapsed, missing the most tenacious defence, with the result that we swapped positions in the standings. In the meantime, David convincingly punished another adventurous brainwave of Richard's, who was more and more losing heart. It's not enough to take risks, you also have to unconditionally believe in your play for it to work! Meanwhile, Pavel tested the new leader, Radek, to his limits, but slipped around move 60 and had to settle for a draw in a ♖+♘ vs. ♖ ending.

With two rounds to go things were as close as ever. In Round 9, I was hoping to get my chances against David with black, in case he didn't play too solidly. This is how it went, and then, while I already got a very comfortable position, an unfortunate pawn grab happened.



Navara-Vachier-Lagrave
Biel 2015 (9)
position after 18.♕xd6

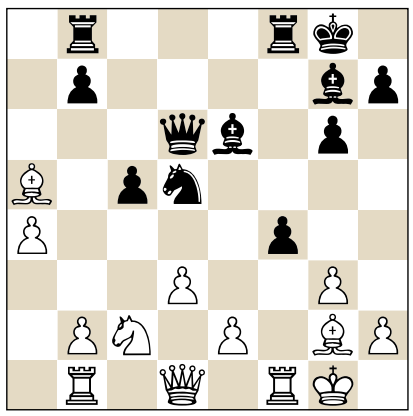
19.♗xa5?

Bereft of all sense of danger, David thought I would just want to get the a4-pawn back.

I was more concerned about 19.♘a3 b6 (19...♗d4+!? 20.♔h1 ♘e3 21.♗xe3 ♗xe3 22.♘c4 ♗xc4 23.dxc4 ♕e7 is only very slightly better for Black) 20.♘c4 ♕d7 21.♖c1, and while things do look pleasant for me, it will not be so easy to break through White's solid configuration, e.g. 21...♖be8 22.e3 ♕d8.

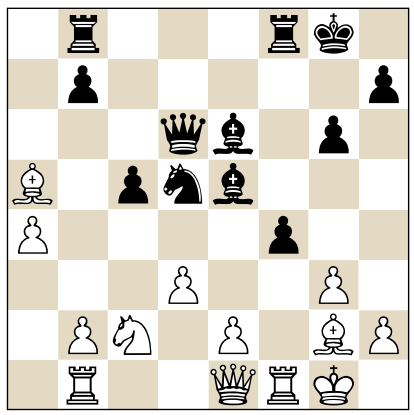
19...f4

I had absolutely no doubt I would win this game after this move. The attack develops itself and my pieces can be aimed at White's king much more easily than White's pieces can be brought over to defend.



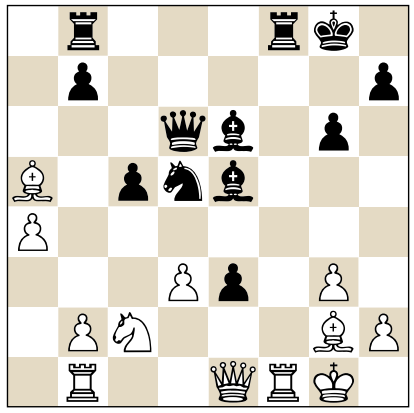
20.♕e1 His best chance was 20.♗e1, for example 20...♗e5 (20...♖be8!? is also a tempting option!) 21.♖f3 ♗g4 22.d4! cxd4 23.♖d3 ♘e3 24.♘xe3 fxe3 25.♕b3+ ♗e6, although Black remains very much in the driver's seat.

20...♗e5 Possibly simpler was 20... fxg3 21.♕xg3 ♗e5 22.♕h4 ♘f4, but I didn't want to allow White's queen to get active.

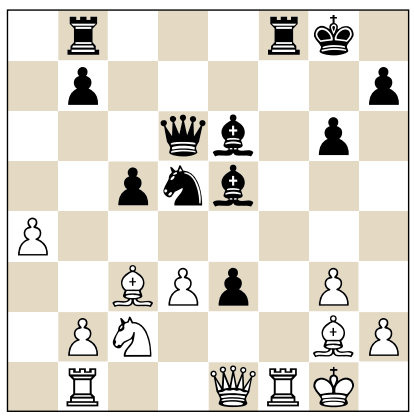


21.e4 Or 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.d4 (22.e4 ♗b3) 22...fxg3! 23.dxe5 gxh2+ 24.♔xh2 ♕xe5+ 25.♕g3 ♕xe2+ 26.♔g1 ♕h5!, and Black wins.

21...fxe3



22.♗c3! The best practical chance. Both 22.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 23.♗xd5 ♗xd5 24.♕xe3 ♖f3 and 22.♗xd5 ♖xf1+ 23.♕xf1 ♗xd5 24.♘xe3 ♗d4 are hopeless.

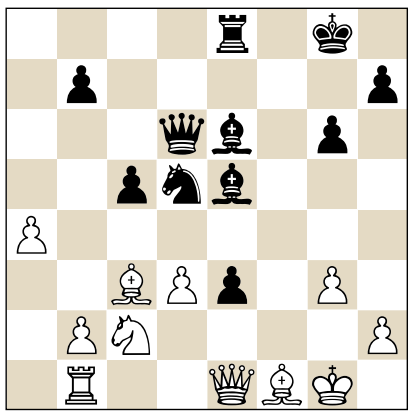


22...♖xf1+

The obvious, and wrong, way to continue was 22...♘xc3? 23.bxc3 ♕xd3 24.♕xe3 ♕xe3+ 25.♘xe3 ♗xc3 26.♗d5, leaving White with serious chances of holding the endgame thanks to a nice blockade that he can create on the queenside and some counterplay with the rooks.

23.♗xf1 ♖e8!

An important move to hang on to my best asset in the position: the passed pawn on e3.

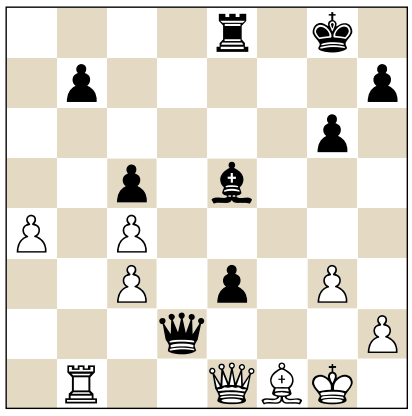


24.♘a3!

After 24.♗xe5 ♕xe5 25.♗g2 e2 26.♕d2 ♘f6 27.b4 ♗d5 the e2-pawn is impossible to handle in the long run.

24.♘xe3 loses to 24...♗xc3 25.bxc3 ♗f7, and 24.d4 to 24...♗g7! 25.dxc5 ♕xc5 26.♗xg7 e2+, winning.

24...♘xc3 25.bxc3 ♗d5 26.♘c4 ♗xc4 27.dxc4 ♕d2



And the passed e-pawn helped me clinch the game a few moves later.

■ ■ ■

On the eve of the decisive last round, I was back in the shared lead with Radek. While I was facing a most likely disheartened Richard, who had lost all his games in the second half so far, Radek had to play against David, who was half a point behind us.

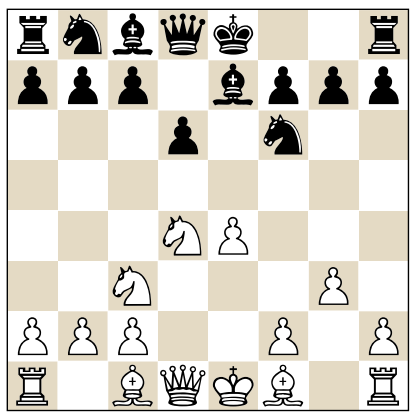
First, let me take away some of the suspense by showing what was my most conclusive display in the tournament.

KP 4.4 – C41
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Richard Rapport
Biel 2015 (10)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6

I knew it was pretty much useless to prepare lines against Richard with White, so I just chose my first move, obviously not expecting the Philidor to happen on the board!

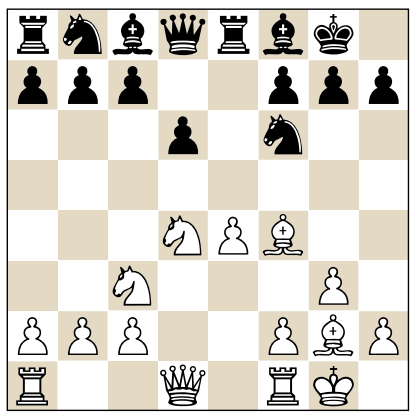
3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗e7 6.g3



6...0-0!

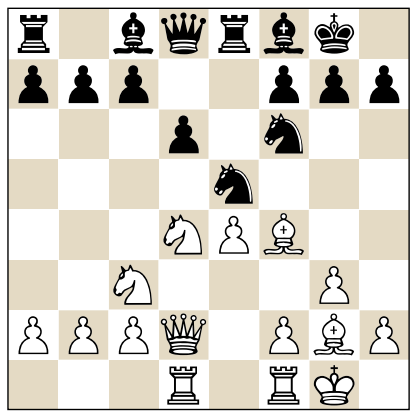
Here I had expected 6...d5 7.e5 ♘g4 8.♗g2, but this line is also slightly better for White.

7.♗g2 ♖e8 8.0-0 ♗f8 9.♗f4



I didn't take much time to play this move. My idea is to hinder Black's ideas of playing ...g6, followed by ...♗g7 (because of ♕d2, followed by ♗h6), and ...c6 (because of the pawn on d6) and develop my pieces naturally. The only problem is that Black now gets his knight to e5 unchallenged.

9...♘bd7 10.♕d2 ♘e5 11.♖ad1



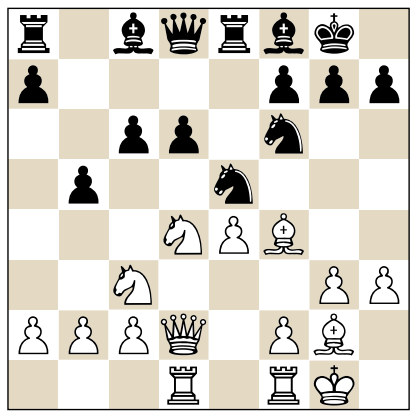
11...c6

Interesting was 11...♘h5!? 12.♗g5 ♘c4! (12...f6 13.♗e3 ♘c4 14.♕e2 clearly favours White) 13.♕c1 f6 14.♗d2 ♘xd2 15.♕xd2 g6, although this should be clearly better for White. Still, managing to trade off White's dark-squared bishop is a great achievement for Black, who still has a solid position.

Another, similar option was 11...♘g6 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.♘d5 ♕d8 15.f4 ♘e7 16.♘e3. But both lines are rather passive, of course.

12.h3 b5!

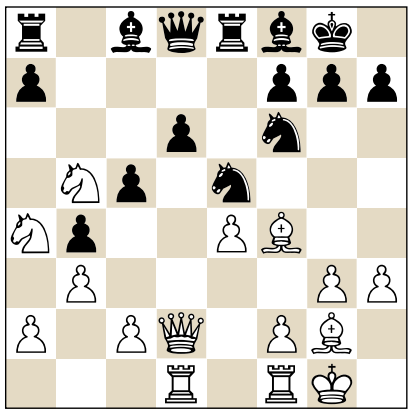
After a long think Richard came up with a nice idea that I had completely missed.



13.b3

White cannot take, 13.♗xe5? dxe5 14.♘xc6, because of 14...♕b6, and the knight is lost.

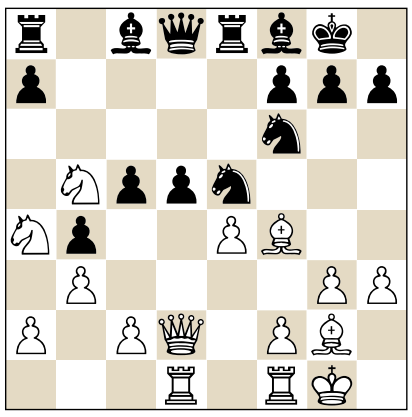
13...b4 14.♘a4 c5 15.♘b5



15...d5!?

I thought this was Richard's idea. But while he was thinking about whether he should play this principled move, I adjusted my own thoughts and found a few nice lines.

After 15...♗a6 there is 16.c4! (16.♘xd6 was my original idea, but it is not so impressive after 16...♗xd6 17.♕xd6 ♕xd6 18.♖xd6 ♗xf1 19.♔xf1 c4, and Black is fine) 16...♗xb5 17.cxb5 ♕a5 18.♗g5 ♕xb5 19.♗xf6 gxf6, and White has excellent compensation for the pawn but possibly no more.



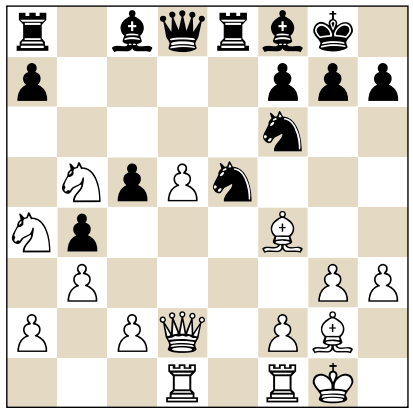
16.exd5!

My first thought was 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5 17.♕f4, but then I realized that things were very unclear after 17...a6! 18.♘bc3! (after both 18.♘d4 ♖xe4 19.♗xe4 ♘xe4 and 18.♘a7 ♖xe4 19.♗xe4 ♖xa7 Black has excellent compensation for the exchange). I had missed the idea behind this move. Now, after 18...♗d6 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♕d2, White threatens f4 and keeps a nice advantage.

But what I played was more forcing, and also a surprise to Richard, as I had hoped it would be.

BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave's 'most conclusive display in the tournament' was his last-round win against a disheartened Richard Rapport.

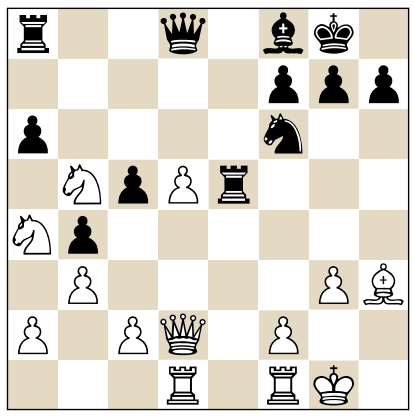


16...♗xh3 White has a clear advantage after 16...♗d7 17.♖fe1 ♘g6 18.♗c7 ♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 ♕c8 20.d6 ♗xb5 21.♘xc5 ♕f5 (21...♘d7 22.♗b7) 22.♗xa8 ♕xc5.

Alternatively, 16...a6 is met by 17.♘c7!, and then there follows a nice and forced line: 17...♕xc7 18.d6 ♕b8 19.♗xe5! (19.♗xa8? ♕xa8 20.♗xe5 ♗xh3) 19...♖xe5 20.♗xa8 ♕xa8 21.♘b6 ♕c6 22.d7! (22.♘xc8 was my idea, but after 22...♖d5! 23.♘a7 ♕b7 24.♕f4 – 24.♕e2 ♖xd6! – 24...♕xa7 25.♖xd5 ♘xd5 26.♕f5 ♘f6 things are suddenly not that clear) 22...♗b7 23.f3 ♘xd7 24.♘xd7, and White is winning.

17.♗xe5 ♖xe5 18.♗xh3 a6

White wins after 18...♖xd5 19.♕e2 a6 20.♗g2.



19.♘bc3 Playing for the passed d-pawn has its drawbacks, as witness the line 19.♘c7?! ♕xc7 20.d6 ♕a7 21.d7 ♖d8 22.♖fe1 ♖h5!. This is why I settled for a position a pawn up.

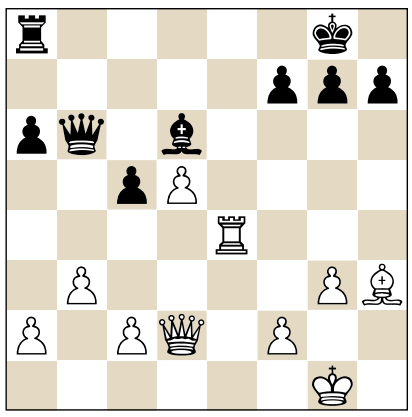
19...bxc3 20.♘xc3 ♗d6

Black still has chances to hold thanks to a solid blockade on the dark squares. Still, I take control of the e-file now.

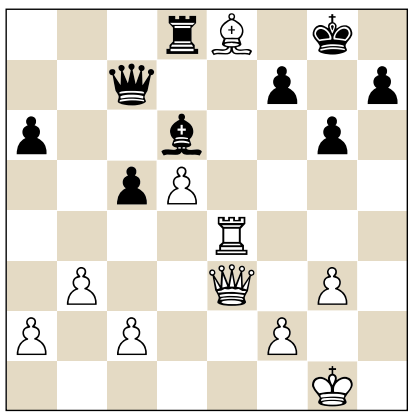
21.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♕c7 23.♘e4 ♘xe4 24.♖xe4 ♕b6?!

Just when I was not completely sure if I would be able to easily break down Black's defences, Richard showed

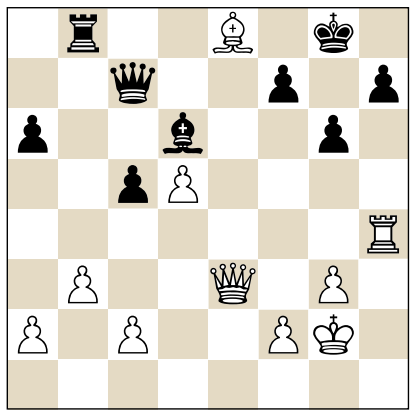
some mental exhaustion and failed to defend correctly. It's difficult to defend passively, for instance with 24...g6 25.♗f1 ♕d7, but the text-move was not called for and gives me additional options.



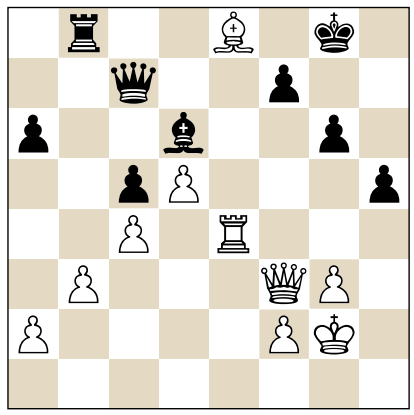
25.♕e3?! g6?! 26.♗d7 Exploiting the fact that the queen has gone to b6. The bishop moves to e8 to create additional threats against Black's king. **26...♖d8 27.♗e8 ♕c7**



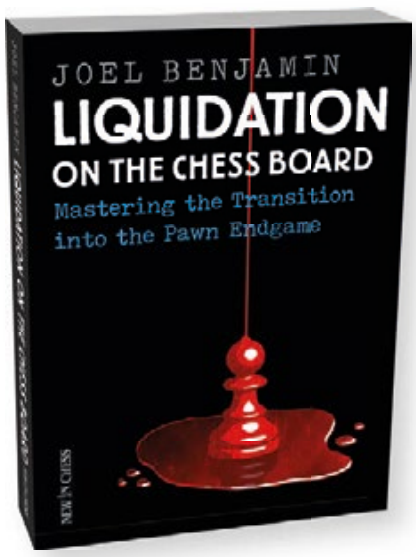
28.♔g2
Tempting but wrong was 28.♖h4?! ♕e7 29.♕h6? ♕e1+ 30.♔g2 ♖xe8, and White has lost all his advantage.
28...♖b8 29.♖h4?!
It is not clear if I should force Black to play ...h5, but it does help to create a few more weaknesses, so I played it automatically.
The immediate 29.♕f3 would have been even stronger, though.



29...h5 Nevertheless, Black is lost. Immediately losing is 29...♗e7? 30.♗xf7+.
But the alternatives are hardly better: 29...♕e7 loses to 30.♕h6 ♕xe8 31.♕xh7+ ♔f8 32.♕h8+ ♔e7 33.♖e4+ winning.
Or 29...♗e5 30.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 31.♖xh7+ ♗g7 32.♕e6+ ♔f8 33.♕xg6 ♖e8 34.♖h4!, and White wins easily thanks to the combined pressure on the king and the many pawns available.
30.♖e4 ♖b4
Missing a last chance to try and patch up the holes in Black's position. 30...♕d8! 31.♕f3 ♖b7 offered the best chance of survival.
31.c4 ♖b8 32.♕f3 Now I manage to break through on the kingside.



32...♗f8 32...♗e5 loses to 33.♕xf7+, and 32...♔f8 to 33.♕f6.
33.♕f6 a5 After 33...♖b6 White again has 34.♗xf7+.
34.d6! ♕b7 After 34...♗xd6 35.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 36.♕xd6 ♖f8 37.♖f4 ♕b7+ 38.♔h2 ♖xf4 39.♕xg6+! the pawn endgame is easily won: 39...♕g7 40.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 41.gxf4 ♔g6 42.♔g3 ♔f5 43.♔h4 ♔xf4 44.♔xh5 ♔f3 45.♔g5 ♔xf2 46.♔f4 ♔e2 47.♔e4 ♔d2 48.♔d5, winning.
35.f3 ♗g7



CJA
Chess Journalists of America

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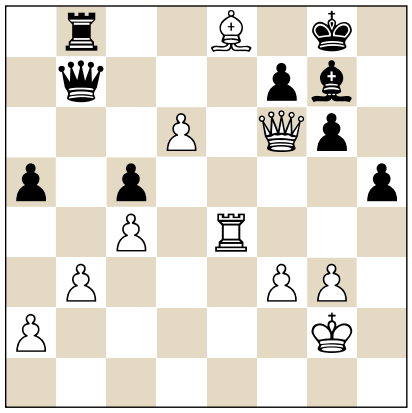
The 2015 Chess Journalist Award for Best Book (paper-printed only)

Liquidation on the Chess Board
New In Chess

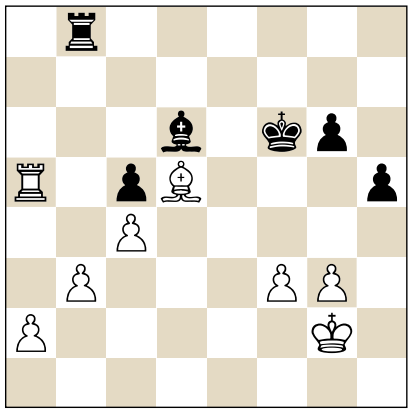
Joshua M. Anderson
Joshua Anderson



36.♕e7

In fact, 36.♕g5 was more lethal, with the d-pawn inevitably queening. But I decided that two pawns should be more than enough to win the ensuing endgame and didn't think any further. Harmless enough here, but this is the hasty kind of move that has cost every chess player a lot of half points in their career!

36...♕xe7 37.♖xe7 ♗f8 38.♗xf7+ ♔g7 39.♖a7 ♗xd6 40.♗d5+ ♔f6 41.♖xa5



Fortunately for me, this endgame is indeed completely hopeless for Black. The a-pawn, supported by the ♗d5, is virtually unstoppable.

41...♖b6 42.f4 g5 43.♔f3 h4 44.fxg5+ ♔xg5 45.gxh4+ ♔xh4 46.♔e4 ♔g5 47.♖b5 ♖b8 48.♖xb8

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

While at some point it was not completely clear whether I would be able to win my game against Richard, Radek was on his way to a very convincing victory, which at the very least would yield him a tiebreak. Until he started slipping irremediably, confused by the resourcefulness of David, who kept finding tricky ideas that kept him from having to throw in the towel. As their game ended in a draw, I unexpectedly took sole first place and completed a hat-trick that now makes me the (almost) official Mr. Biel! This is obviously a string of results that I take some pride in, and I hope to build on it for the events that are in store for me next, as on the whole I was satisfied with my level of play.

> 'As their game ended in a draw, I unexpectedly took sole first place and completed a hat-trick that now makes me the (almost) official Mr. Biel!'

Radek also had good reasons to be satisfied with his first tournament as a married man, although his last game may have left him with a bitter taste. David's play was original, and we owe him the highlight of the tournament, but at times he was too unstable to claim first place. Michael's play was uncharacteristically unstable, but he still scored enough wins to finish on +1, although I have the feeling he was not satisfied with his play. Pavel had his ups and downs, notably with Lady Luck, and his tournament could have looked completely different, for instance if he had not made such a howler in his last game against Michael, losing control from a tremendous looking position.

And finally there is Richard, who was playing highly interesting chess at the beginning, then lost confidence and, more importantly, control. But I hope he will manage to learn from these expensive mistakes, as the talent is definitely there.

When everything was over, I managed to celebrate my victory in style by finally overcoming my rustiness in tennis to even things up with Rustam 'Rusty' Kasimdzhanov. And then it was time to say goodbye to Biel, which was organised with the usual passion by the team led by Peter Burri and Peter Bohnenblust. The latter was seen at the tournament hall a bit too often for someone who had recently undergone a hip operation! And of course, one has to mention Yannick Pelletier and Marie Boyard, respectively the tournament director and the press chief, and the novelty of this year's edition, their son Daniel, who mainly provided entertainment during breakfast. I'm sure he'll find his true place in the coming years, with the Biel Chess Festival heading for its 50th edition, which hopefully will take place in 2017. ■

Biel 2015 — **cat. XIX**

					1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2731	* *	½ 0	1 1	½ 1	½ ½	½ 1	6½	2828
2	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	IGM	POL	2733	½ 1	* *	½ ½	0 ½	1 ½	½ 1	6	2863
3	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2740	0 0	½ ½	* *	1 1	0 1	½ 1	5½	2752
4	David Navara	IGM	CZE	2724	½ 0	1 ½	0 0	* *	1 ½	1 1	5½	2755
5	Pavel Eljanov	IGM	UKR	2723	½ ½	0 ½	1 0	0 ½	* *	½ 1	4½	2683
6	Richard Rapport	IGM	HUN	2671	½ 0	½ 0	½ 0	0 0	½ 0	* *	2	2490

Youth Movement

When Bobby Fischer became a grandmaster at 15 in 1958, it was a shocking accomplishment. It was still shocking when Judit Polgar became the second player to become a grandmaster at such a young age in 1991. But as computers and the Internet began to transform the game, players started developing far more quickly. In the last 10 years, the floodgates have really opened. Now, players who earn the title at 15 years old, or younger, while hardly unremarkable, are certainly more commonplace. Indeed, as the graphics below show, the majority of players earning the grandmaster title are usually younger than 25. And earning the title at 18, as Boris Spassky did in 1955, is almost a late bloomer by today's standards.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

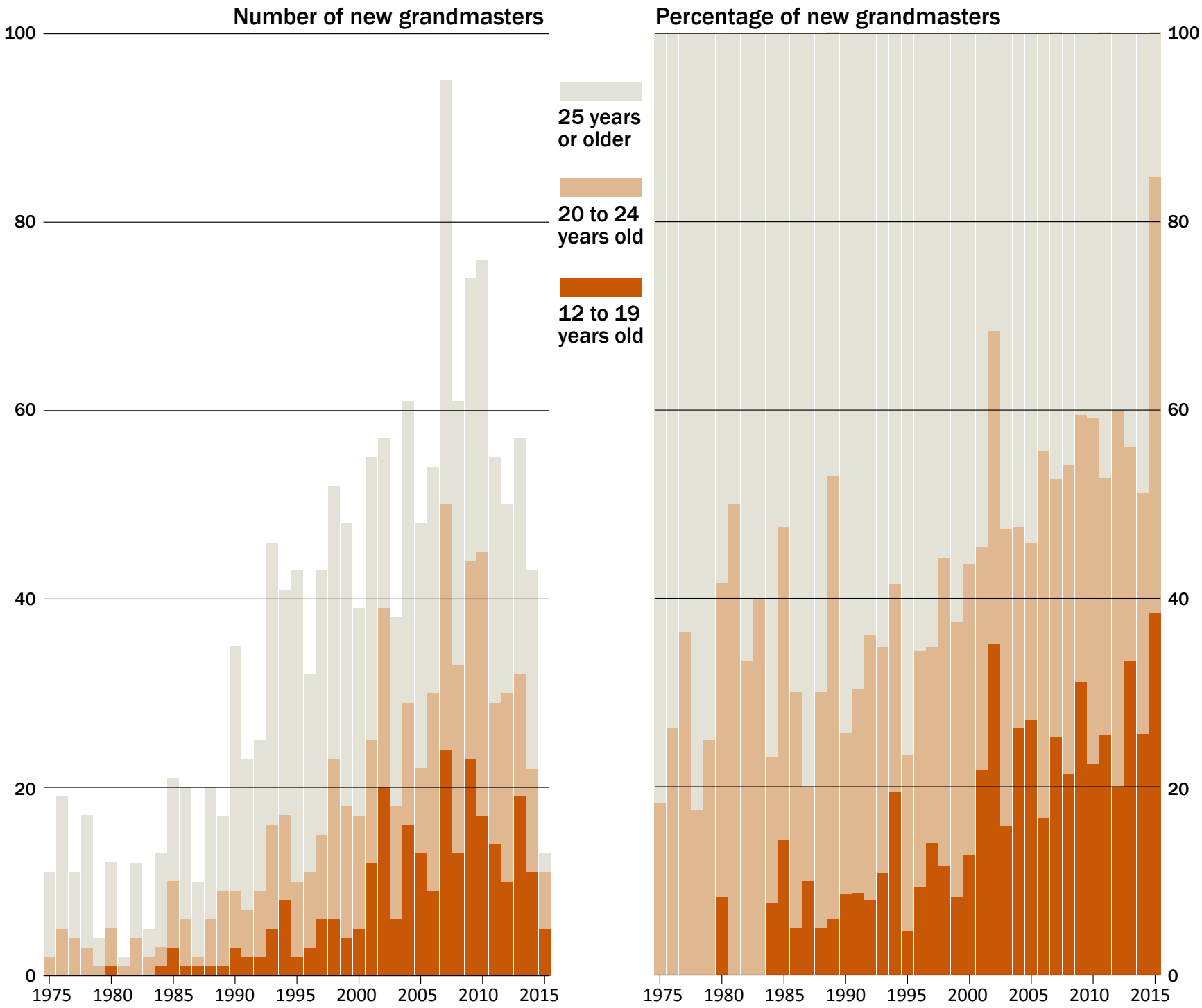
In 1994, Peter Leko became the first grandmaster younger than 15 years old.

Bu Xiangzhi lowered the bar in 1999 when he became the first grand-master younger than 14.

Sergey Karjakin set the record that still stands when he earned the title in 2002 at 12 years 7 months.

Earlier this year, at 15 years 8 months, Wei Yi became the youngest player to raise his rating over 2700.

Samuel Sevian is currently the world's youngest grandmaster. He turns 15 in December.



Fair & Square

Brian Sewell: 'I find that chess is very useful when travelling alone in Turkey... Take yourself to the nearest tea-house. Order a glass of tea, and another or Raki, and set up a chess problem. Within seconds Turks will appear. They won't play chess with you, but it starts a conversation. I did this once and someone asked, "Can I practise my English with you?" His first question was: "How many princesses have you slept with?" So now you see the point of chess.'
(A useful piece of advice from the legendary British art critic & media personality)

Anish Giri: 'When more than two TWICs are missing on your laptop, you know that something has gone wrong with your chess routine.'
(Tweeted after returning from his honeymoon)

Paul Rudd: 'There's just something worldwide and timeless about Lego. I've thought actually for many years, that Lego might be the best toy. In the same way that I think chess might be the best game, I think Lego might be the best toy.'
(The new Hollywood superhero, interviewed ahead of the release of Ant-Man, after finding out there would now be a Lego figure of him)

Siegbert Tarrasch: 'Chess is a terrible game. If you have no centre, your opponent has a freer position. If you do have a centre, then you really have something to worry about!'

Bent Larsen: 'If you play the Caro-Kann when you're young, what are you going to play when you're older?'

Peter Svidler: 'People play that line against me in every event – eventually I was bound to have something ready.'
(After beating Chinese teenager Wei Yi in the annual Russia vs China match)

F. Scott Fitzgerald: 'His face, wan in the light that the white spray caught and tossed back to the brilliant sky, had none of the lines of annoyance she had expected. It was even detached; his eyes focussed upon her gradually as upon a chessman to be moved; in the same slow manner he caught her wrist and drew her near.'
(Tender is the Night)

Alan Perkins: 'The football commentator's remark that the game is "like a game of chess" is now almost a cliché, but many years ago I heard a particularly funny and original version. Sheffield Wednesday were playing Manchester United and both teams were without their star players, Waddle and Cantona respectively. Kevin Keegan summed it up perfectly – "It's like a game of chess in which the queens have been exchanged."'

Dan Pfeiffer: 'The best politicians play chess, but most candidates play checkers. The chess players know you have to be willing to lose a piece or two to win the game… but if Jeb Bush wants to survive the "Trumpnado" and become the [Republican] nominee he needs to be, he should play a little chess, get out of Iowa and get to New Hampshire as soon as possible.'
(The former Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama and CNN Political Analyst before the first Republican presidential candidates debate)

Viktor Malkin: 'Mikhail Gromov, the outstanding Soviet pilot, wrote that if one wants to become a good pilot one must learn the art of self-control. These words may apply equally to chess and to every chessplayer.'
(An apt comparison by the Soviet psychologist/chess master/writer)

Julian Barnes: 'The truth is that too many pawn-pushers belong to the trainspotter tendency. Anoraks, plastic bags, old sandwiches and introverted excitement are some of their characteristics.'
(From his book Letters from London 1990-1995)

Vishy Anand: 'Chess is not a job you do to keep your parents happy. It's a job you do because you really love playing.'
(In his Extra Mural Lecture last March, at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras)

Denis Diderot: 'Paris is that certain place in the world, and Café de la Régence is that certain place in Paris, where one can find at any time the best chess players in the world.'
(The French philosopher, in 1762)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: 'Daring ideas are like chessmen moved forward. They may be beaten, but they may start a winning game.'

Walter Tevis: 'People who say that chess is trivial aren't looking very hard at their lives doing what they claim is important. You can't get by in chess on bull.'
(Talking about his 1983 chess-themed novel The Queen's Gambit)

H

He was a close friend of Humphrey Bogart's and rubbed shoulders with Clark Gable, Cecil B. DeMille, Spencer Tracy, Lana Turner and many other heroes of the Golden Age of cinema. Rumour has it that Marlene Dietrich was so smitten by him that she tried to seduce him. And who could blame la Dietrich? With his dazzling looks, disarming smile and twinkling eyes, Herman Steiner looked more like a film star than the chess teacher and promoter he was. Based on his research for a book on Steiner, **BRUCE MONSON** tells the story of a charismatic man whose legendary Hollywood Chess Group was only one of his great contributions to American chess.

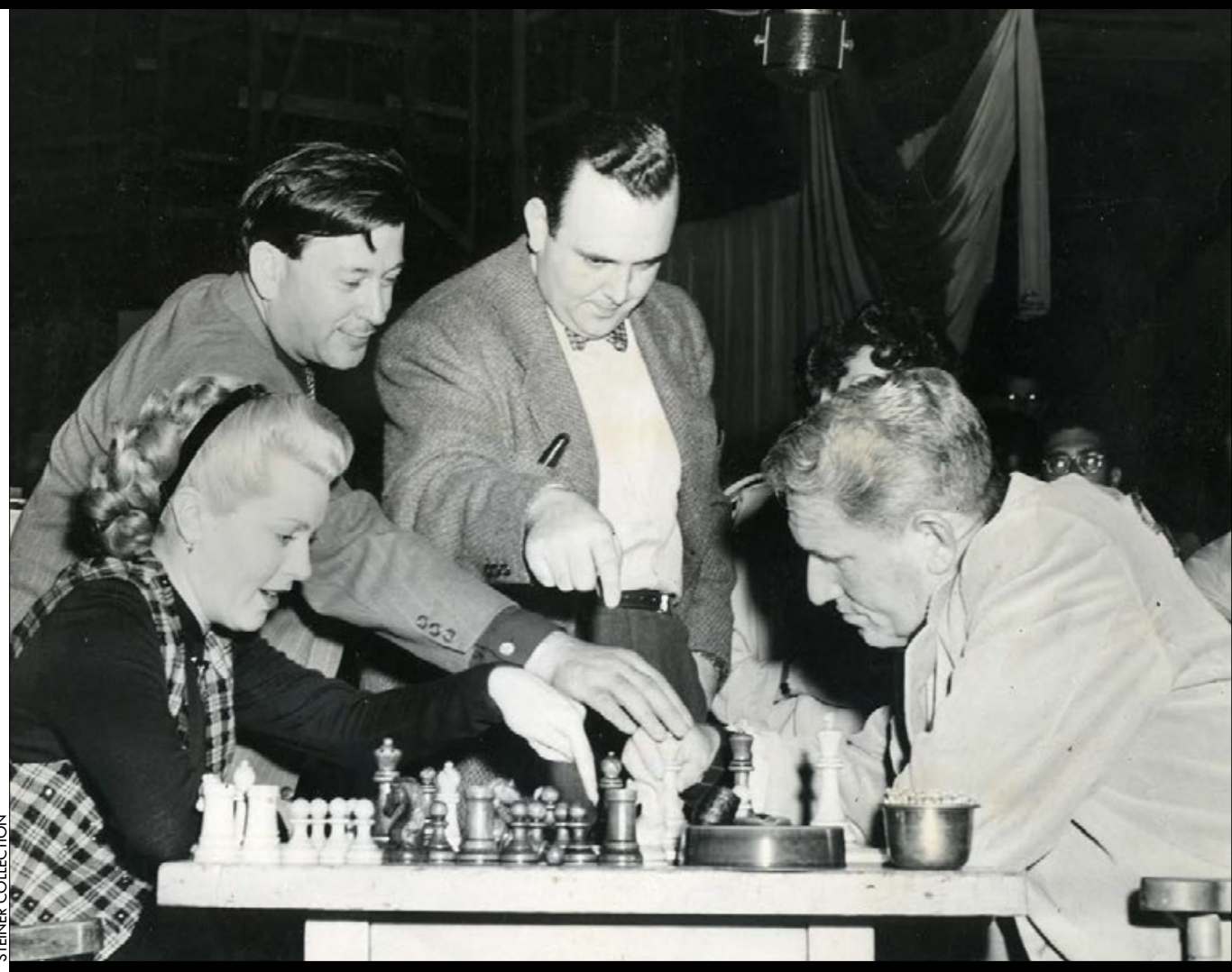
Herman Steiner and Argentine master Hector Rossetto sit poolside at the Hollywood Athletic Club in 1945 with movie starlets Barbara Bates and Carmen Miranda. Then, as now, sex sells!

STEINER COLLECTION

Herman Steiner's Hollywood

How a Hungarian immigrant got the film stars to play chess

Herman Steiner



STEINER COLLECTION

On the set of *Cass Timberlane* (1947). Herman choreographs the 'chess scene' between screen legends Lana Turner and Spencer Tracy while director George Sidney looks on. A notorious flirt, Steiner allegedly said to Lana: 'You should not play chess, it might ruin that perfect figure.'

If it's true that the measure of a good life is how many show up for your funeral, then Herman Steiner's, after his unexpected death from a heart attack at the age of 50 on November 25, 1955, was special indeed. People turned out in the hundreds. Among these were actors Jose Ferrer, Rosemary Clooney (aunt of actor George Clooney), Warren Newcombe, and Fritz Feld. Those who could not attend paid their respects in vigils around the state; at the Mechanic's Institute in San Francisco, at Atascadero, San Luis Obispo and San Diego. There was even a gathering at the famous *Romanoff's* restaurant in Beverly Hills, the site of many famous chess exhibitions by Reshevsky, and where Herman would frequently meet up with Humphrey Bogart, Billy Wilder, Herbert Marshall and other chess-playing movie stars for casual instruction and bantering.

For weeks afterward phone calls, telegrams and letters expressing condolences poured in from England, Russia, Mexico, Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, the Netherlands and even Australia; and not only from chess circles but from many others outside of chess whom Herman had interacted with during his life, particularly in the music industry.

The entire December issue of the *California Chess Reporter* – the official chess magazine for the state – was dedicated solely to Steiner. The state championship for 1955 was also cancelled in tribute, though in hindsight that was probably a mistake. 'Herman, of all people,' quipped Bob Jacobs, 'would have wanted the games to go on, fighting to the end.'

'Herman is gone,' wrote his close friend Irving Rivise, 'but wherever chess is played he will long be remembered... His contagious laughter and infectious good humor will be sorely missed.'

Outside direct family, probably no one felt the loss more deeply than Jacqueline Piatigorsky, Herman's most devoted follower and student. 'Herman's immense love for the game spread a spark which brought chess to life in California,' she lamented. 'He made chess alive for thousands of school children; he created a woman's field for chess in this part of the country... He gave without reserve of his dynamic personality, spreading warmth, hope, enthusiasm, and new ideas... He was the best friend I ever had and in chess I owe him all I know.'

Handsome Herman

For most, the name Herman Steiner likely incites images of movie stars and the Golden Age of Hollywood. And that's well founded. From the early 1930s until his death his associations with the movie industry were extensive, although it comprised only a tiny fraction of his connections around the world. Multiple dozens of press photos showed him with such screen legends as Cecil B. DeMille, Spencer Tracy, Gary Cooper, Basil Rathbone, Lana Turner, Shirley Temple and numerous others. Many of these photos found their way into chess publications, the most famous being the cover photo from the June-July 1945 issue of *Chess Review*, where Herman appeared with Humphrey Bogart, Charles Boyer and Lauren Bacall at Warner Bros. Studios.

In the summer of 1945 Herman was soliciting support for the Hollywood Pan-Am Chess Congress he was organizing as part *VE Day* celebration (VE stands for Victory in Europe – ed.) and part fundraiser for troops still engaged in the Pacific. He had promised his chess colleagues around the country that 'many movie stars are interested in the game and would be taking part in the events.' He was true to his word. The movie industry support alone included a *who's who* of famous actors, directors and producers, including his close friend Humphrey Bogart who actually became a U.S.C.F. Tournament Director for the event (an honorary title and PR stunt crafted by Herman). Others included Billy

Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock, Joseph von Sternberg, Vincent Price, Gene Tierney, Edward G. Robinson, Linda Darnell and many others. Reuben Fine was famously awestruck by Darnell whom he called 'the most beautiful woman [he'd] ever seen,' although blushing *Time* photos of him on the beach 'teaching chess' to bathing suit-clad actress, Jane Nigh, might suggest otherwise. In the run-up to the event, Herman was at the studios almost daily soliciting support and promoting the event. He would teach chess to actors on movie sets between scenes. He even established a makeshift chess club in the cafeteria at Warner Bros. with tables 'reserved for chess' so stars could practice.

Marlene Dietrich also attended the event, having just returned from a USO tour in Europe entertaining the troops. Interestingly, even though she knew how to play chess, she was initially put off by the event, even antagonistic, asking how people could be 'playing chess while men are dying overseas!' It was Herman who quelled the fire, explaining that, 'like her, they were trying to do something to "support the troops", in the form of donations from the proceeds.' It was rumored that Dietrich – a known predator of men – was so smitten by Herman she tried to seduce him. Unlikely, but plausible. She certainly wouldn't have been the first starlet to have the twinkle-eyed Magyar in their cross-hairs. 'That's all rumor, of course,' noted Gene Rubin, a long-time member of Herman's club. 'Herman's love life was occasionally a topic of speculation, given all the photos of beautiful starlets on the club walls.' Then, with a chuckle, he continues: 'It would be a shame if he didn't land at least one of them!' When asked directly Herman would leave the matter hanging, 'with a wink and a smile.' That was part of the mystique. Herman knew how to 'play the part,' which helped pay the bills, a fact his wife Selma accepted... grudgingly.

The truth is the bond between Herman and Selma was extremely strong. She was the glue that held everything together. The measured counterweight to Herman's bursting ebullience. She was even an integral part of writing Herman's weekly chess column in the *Los Angeles Times*, especially when he was away at tournaments; answering the mail, typing as Herman dictated, and correcting for spelling and grammar. 'Dammit, Herman,' she'd say, 'you can't say it like *that*, it's not proper English!'

Always a Gracious Host

The Steiner house was literally a revolving door for distinguished guests. 'You never knew *who* he'd bring home,' recalled his son Armin. 'He'd call ahead telling my mother so-and-so would be coming over for dinner. One night it might be Carl Sandburg, the next Jose Ferrer, Humphrey Bogart or some other movie person. Even Albert Einstein once had dinner at our house. My father had me play my violin for him.'

> 'Herman even established a makeshift chess club in the cafeteria at Warner Bros. with tables 'reserved for chess' so stars could practice.'

For chess players visiting southern California, Herman would arrange for all their accommodations and needs – often in his own home – and would invariably take them on personal tours of the movie studios, where he would introduce them to famous actors. Arthur Dake recalled Herman taking him and his wife to meet Debbie Reynolds (mother of Carrie Fisher) and British actor, James Mason. In the run-up to their 1946 U.S. Championship match in Hollywood, Herman introduced Arnold Denker to William Bendix and the legendary film director Billy Wilder, who was a huge chess fan and one of Steiner's biggest supporters. Euwe, Prins, Gligoric, Reshevsky and others had similar stories.

Many of these photos appeared in Al Horowitz's *Chess Review*, 'The Picture Chess Magazine', which not only cemented Steiner's image as 'Handsome Herman of Hollywood', but also contributed greatly to the popularity of that magazine.

For the old-timers reading this, much of this information will be *old hat*. For the new generation, fueled by the catwalk sex appeal of Magnus Carlsen and other top play-

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

In Charles Boyer's dressing room on the set of *Confidential Agent* (1945). Boyer and Bogey contemplate a tricky rook and pawn endgame while Herman gets 'the look' from Lauren Bacall in response to whatever it is he's doing with his left hand…

STEINER COLLECTION

During Max Euwe's visit to California in January 1949 Herman introduced him to several movie stars including screen legend Clark Gable, as seen here on the set of *Any Number Can Play* (1949) along with Samuel Reshevsky.

ers making chess mainstream today, it may come as a surprise to learn that the road they're traveling was paved long ago by one of the most colorful and enterprising figures in chess history. But the images capture Steiner at the height of his popularity, after he had 'made it', so to speak. Less well known is how he got to that point!

Go West, Young Man!

Herman was born Armin Steiner (Herman is a phonetic translation) on April 15, 1905 to Bernard and Rose Steiner (originally the name was Kovesii) in Eperjes, a settlement in the Dunaszerdahely township, then part of Hungary, later Czechoslovakia and today Dunajská Streda in Slovakia. For a short time Herman went by Stoner, even playing in a couple of tournaments under that name, but thought it sounded too Germanic and settled on Steiner. He was the seventh of ten children. His father was a tailor and the family had been in the furrier business as long as anyone could remember. In the aftermath of World War I, as their homeland was being carved-up at the Paris Peace Conference, they relocated to Budapest with family. Like millions of others in war-torn Europe they set their gaze on the Atlantic, hoping for something better in the New World.

Herman immigrated in 1921 with his older sister, Eva. His first experience with transatlantic travel made a strong impression. Not even three weeks in steerage within the bowels of the no-frills liner U.S.S. Antigone – which had been utilized heavily for U.S. troop transports during the war – could quell the love of travel and adventure that was to shape his life. And like all immigrants, he marveled at the Statue of Liberty as his ship groaned into New York harbor, en route to Ellis Island. He was sixteen and spoke only the few English words he had practised on their voyage. Luckily, his older sister, Charlotte, had immigrated 10 years earlier and was established in New York. Having a place to go, and more specifically someone to take charge of you, was among the primary conditions immigration officials looked for. There were no guarantees you would be allowed entry, which is why Ellis Island came to be known as the 'Island of Hope, Island of Tears'. Herman and his sister made it through with little difficulty, as did his parents and two younger brothers the following year. Eventually the whole family made it over. The family settled in Astoria, near the famous Hell Gate bridge on the East River that connects Astoria to Wards Island in Manhattan.

Most of the family went to work at a nearby furrier factory, but Herman and his younger brothers attended school and spent much of their time at the local YMCA where Herman excelled at sports like boxing, wrestling and soccer. His first introduction to chess came after being 'kicked in the shin' while playing goalie in a soccer game. Herman claims his injury was bad enough to 'land him in the hospital', and while laid-up in bed he saw two kids playing chess and learned the game from them.

Early on his chess was not good. He was no prodigy. But he was a fast learner. Herman often told the story of how he was given 10 cents a day 'pocket money' by family for doing tasks around the house, errands, etc. He had carefully saved it and one day went to a local coffee house and saw a man sitting at a table with a chessboard setup. The man offered to play him a game and Herman was happy to oblige. Just as they started the man said they should play for something – perhaps a dime – and Herman fell for it and lost all his money. 'It was the old pool-room gag', Herman said, 'the man made a living beating people who thought they could play chess.' He was so mad he went to the chess club (The Hungarian Chess Club) and took lessons for six months, then returned to the coffee shop and got his money back, with interest!

He was hooked!

But it wasn't until witnessing the almost regal pageantry surrounding the 'chess stars' at the New York 1924 tournament that he was inspired to become a 'professional chess player', to travel the world and brush shoulders with the likes of Lasker, Capablanca, Rubinstein and his personal hero, Geza Maroczy. From 1924-28 all of Herman's spare time was spent playing at various chess clubs in the New York area, including the famous *Marshall*, *Manhattan*

and *Rice Progressive* clubs. As early as 1925 he was already champion of the *Hungarian* club, and by 1929 he was New York state champion. His attacking style and gregarious nature got him noticed by U.S. champion Frank Marshall (it was impossible *not* to notice Herman) and he was invited to be on the U.S. Olympiad team that competed at The Hague in 1928, and then again at Hamburg 1930. During that time he also defeated the talented Belgian master, Edgard Colle, in a short match, and won the Hastings Premier Reserves (1929).

In the Spring of 1930 the nomadic Steiner made his first trip to California. Fresh off his second European chess tour, the 'member of the American Olympiad team' was on a walkabout of sorts, seeing America, and whatever else it is that virile young stallions do in their travels. Upon reaching southern California he was surprised to find a thriving chess community which had nearly as many chess clubs as New York at that time. Banks, auto clubs, chambers of commerce, even the transit authority had their own chess clubs. What The Great Depression had taken in financial stability it had replaced with time, leaving people in search of any form of cheap entertainment to occupy themselves. Chess fit the bill nicely. After playing some simuls and generally endearing himself to the locals, Herman's organizing skills made an appearance. He was instrumental in organizing an 'historic radio match' between Los Angeles and the *Gimnasia y Esgrima* chess club in Rosario, Argentina that, at a distance of 6,000 miles, was billed as the 'longest distance ever attempted' by radio up to that time.

It took four sessions, but Los Angeles finally prevailed 1½-½. Steiner and Sherwood, playing black, drew against Cristia and Ferreyra, while Borochow and Elliott defeated Garcia and Rivarola.

Herman was always interested in technology and utilizing it in creative ways to advance chess. He promoted and organized 'radio events' for over 25 years, including many matches against clubs in Central and South America, but culminating in the famous USA vs. USSR radio match of 1945, in which he was the sole American with a plus score (defeating Bondarevsky 1½-½) in an otherwise rout by the Soviets.

'Upon reaching southern California he was surprised to find a thriving chess community which had nearly as many chess clubs as New York at that time.'

During his trip to California, Steiner also made an appearance in San Francisco, where he played a simul against a strong field at the famous Mechanic's Institute Chess Club, scoring +14 -2 =1. No easy feat. He then won a short 'best of three' match 2-0 against then-state champion and famous problem composer, Adolf Fink.

California suited his tastes, especially southern California with its sunny skies, warm Pacific waters, and scantily clad women. It even became his mantra: 'California, chess and California chess.' Were it not for a cable from New York offering him a place on the U.S. team set to sail for the Hamburg Olympiad, he most likely would have stayed. But Europe called, and while the Americans could only muster sixth place they made a strong showing. The following year they brought home the gold

STEINER COLLECTION

Svetozar Gligoric made his first trip to California in 1952 for Steiner's Hollywood International, which he won by half a point over Arturo Pomar. Naturally, Herman took him by the movie studios. Here Gliga meets Stewart Granger on the set of *Prisoner of Zenda* (1952).

Pasadena Chess Congress 'Garden Party', Santa Monica, 1932.
Sitting (l. to r.): Adolf Fink, Jose Araiza, Samuel Factor (nephew of makeup legend Max Factor), Harry Borochow, Alexander Alekhine, Arthur Dake, Herman Steiner, Jacob Bernstein, Isaac Kashdan.
Second from far-right (holding white gloves) is Selma Siegelman, the future Mrs. Herman Steiner!

at the Prague Olympiad, signaling the arrival of the Americans as a powerhouse in international chess. Herman also added some strong results to his resume, finishing 2nd at Györ 1930, behind his compatriot Kashdan; 1st at Berlin 1931, ahead of Sämisch; and 2nd at Brunn 1931, behind Flohr.

Pasadena Chess Congress

It would be nearly two years before Herman returned to the Golden State, this time to play in the historic Pasadena International Chess Congress, held on the heels of the 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympics where Babe Didrikson became a household name for her accomplishments in women's track and field. 1932 was also the year another *Babe* – baseball legend Babe Ruth – allegedly made his famous 'called shot', pointing an outstretched finger toward the centerfield bleachers at Wrigley Field in Game 5 of the 1932 World Series, then banging a home run to *that* spot on the next pitch! Or so goes the myth.

Nothing quite that dramatic occurred at the Pasadena Congress, except perhaps Arthur Dake's surprise upset against World Champion Alexander Alekhine. In fact, not even Alekhine's presence could make the tournament register more than a blip on the chessic *Richter Scale*. While the tournament had a *who's who* of rising American stars, including teenage sensations Reuben Fine and Sammy Reshevsky, the absence of pre-tournament invitees Capablanca and Marshall dulled enthusiasm markedly.

Capablanca had actually agreed to play but in the end was *disinvited*, while Marshall reneged on his original commitment – the former because he was being dodged by Alekhine, and the latter because he was dodging 'The Little Capablanca', Isaac Kashdan. Alekhine had demanded an outlandish $2000 'appearance fee' (about $37,000 in today's dollars) if the Cuban were allowed to play. Score one for Alekhine. Amusingly, on the day the tournament was to begin 'a stir and bustle of excitement swept through the crowded tournament hall' when it was reported that 'Capablanca had just registered at the door!' The rumor was false, but it would have been worth the admission price just to see Alekhine's reaction.

Whether or not history could have been changed had Capablanca played at Pasadena 1932 will never be known. What *is* known is that Herman Steiner's participation actually did change history, both his own and that of American chess.

While Herman finished in a respectable tie for 3rd with Reshevsky and Dake, his play was inconsistent and at times distracted, drawing in won positions, losing in drawn positions and allowing Alekhine yet another 'brilliancy prize' game against him. It was on a free day during the tournament that Joseph 'Judge' Lippman, one of the patrons of the tournament, gave a gala 'garden party' at his Santa Monica estate in honor of Alekhine and the other players. One young lady in attendance was Miss Selma Siegelman, concert pianist.

To say that Selma was captivated by the dashing young Steiner would be an understatement. But then he had that effect on most women. As Arnold Denker put it, Herman was 'one charming devil with a disarming smile and a twinkle in his eye that women could not resist'. A torrid affair followed, which may account for Herman's mixed results at Pasadena. After the tournament Herman decided to make California his 'permanent base of operations,' a decision no doubt influenced by his relationship with Selma. Given his gypsy-like nature and playboy proclivities, however, it is difficult to imagine that only a few months later the two would be married!

Storming the Castle

There was another reason why California was so enticing – no competition. Walter Shipman said it best: 'In New York Herman was a small fish in a big pond; in California that role was reversed.'

In the early 1930s the best players in the state were Harry Borochow (1898-1993) and Adolf Fink (1890-1956), both strong masters, but a full class below Herman. For Fink, who lived in the San Francisco area, it didn't matter. But for Borochow – the current state champion and 'king of southern California chess' – the extended presence of someone like Steiner was a major threat to the local hegemony.

Well before Herman came on the scene it was actually Borochow who had the Hollywood chess connections. In 1921 he was working as a film developer at Clunes film lab in Hollywood, which adjoined to the film studio where Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. and Charlie Chaplin were working. In fact, Borochow was *there* that day in 1921 when Chaplin brought nine-year-old Sammy Reshevsky by to meet Fairbanks on the set of *The Three Musketeers* (not *Mask of Zorro* as some have claimed), where the now famous photos were taken.

Herman didn't have a vindictive bone in his body so there was probably no 'design' on his part to upset the cart, but that's exactly what happened! In a bloodless *coup* that Fulgencio Batista would have appreciated, Steiner effectively usurped the throne through the only stats that really mattered: looks, charm and showmanship.

In the charm department, the notoriously aloof Borochow was no match for the *über*-charismatic Steiner. But the real *coup* came on January 7, 1933, when Herman performed a 'record breaking' simultaneous exhibition at the Hollywood Athletic Club. Advertised as against '400 opponents' operating on '100 boards with up to four players consulting on each board', the spectacle was a huge success, though the actual numbers are disputed. Various accounts give it as 80 boards against 280, or 68 boards against 272. In a 1941 interview, Steiner claimed he had faced 80 boards against 320 opponents, scoring +68 –9 =3. Whatever the exact numbers, it was proclaimed at the time to be a 'world record for consultation simultaneous chess,' even though both Alekhine and Capablanca had put up larger opponent totals (though on fewer boards) earlier in 1932. World record claims aside, it was a grand performance that made a powerful impression, particularly on millionaire oil magnate and Los Angeles Athletic Club (L.A.A.C) co-founder, Frank A. Garbutt (1869-1947).

Garbutt played a sizeable role in Herman's future in Hollywood. He not only provided him room and board in one of the guest apartments at the luxurious Hollywood Athletic Club (Charlie Chaplin once lived in the penthouse of this famous club), but also gave him the envious job 'Club Professional'. This lucrative title not only afforded Herman *carte blanche* access to the club's immaculate facilities, but also carried a high degree of clout since he was now 'officially associated' with the club.

But it didn't stop there. Although the L.A.A.C. had a large and thriving chess club, Garbutt provided Herman free club space to open his *International Chess Club and College*, an early precursor to what would later morph into his *Hollywood Chess Group*, though that was still five years away. On January 31, just three weeks after his 'world record' simul, Steiner opened the doors to his new club, utilizing the event as a dual 'grand opening' and 'wedding reception' for his new wife of only a few hours, Selma Steiner!

Chess Teacher of the Stars

One of Herman's first Hollywood students at his new 'college' would not be a chess student in the traditional sense, but rather a photo-op set up by the publicity department at Paramount studios, which Frank Garbutt had also co-founded (originally as Famous Players Studio) to help promote the rising new movie starlet, Lona Andre.

Andre's route to stardom began with a nationwide contest crafted by

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Hollywood Athletic Club, early 1930s. Charlie Chaplin once lived in the grand penthouse apartment seen here at top right.

STEINER COLLECTION

Move over Magnus! Herman was the first 'chess is the new sexy' fashion model! Lona Andre and Herman Steiner, Los Angeles Times fashion photo-shoot, Hollywood 1933

Paramount Studios, who were looking for a 'Panther Woman' for their upcoming production of *Island of Lost Souls* (1933). Lona was the runner-up to Kathleen Burke, who got the part. But there was much publicity around her and she was selected as 'one of thirteen promising starlets' by the Western Association of Motion Picture Advisors (WAMPAS), class of 1932, which included future film legends Gloria Stuart and Ginger Rogers. Some may recall Stuart's final role, at age 87, in the 2004 blockbuster *Titanic*, for which she was nominated for an Oscar.

This was a typical ploy by movie studios at the time, especially those like Paramount, which were operating in the red. They looked for any coattail to ride on, and Herman's recent media attention and movie star looks made him a perfect target for exploitation. And Herman was all too happy to be exploited, especially if it included beautiful women!

On March 12, 1933 Herman appeared with Lona Andre in the fashion section of the *Los Angeles Times* – the fashion section! – under the caption: *Chess! Chess! Herman Steiner, who recently opened a chess club and college in Hollywood, has special classes for film folk. Lona Andre is one of his pupils.*

This was Herman's first business venture with Cecil B. DeMille and Joseph von Sternberg, who were underwriters of the 'Panther Woman' contest at Paramount and supporters of the annual WAMPAS competition. His reward was likely not much monetarily, but free publicity as 'chess teacher of the stars' and other 'Hollywood perks', that was gold!

Paradoxically, this 'chess teacher of the stars' image was a disservice in some ways since it typecast Steiner into a 'role' of sorts. While you could do a lot worse than to have your name associated with the likes of Humphrey Bogart and Spencer Tracy, this actually encompassed only a tiny fraction of his vast associations. In fact, it was music – not chess – that was the primary drivetrain in the Steiner household. His friendships with musicians ran particularly deep and included such names as Gregor Piatigorsky, Jascha Heifetz, William Primrose, David Oistrakh, Fritz Kreisler, Toscha Seidel and many others. Selma had been a concert pianist prior to her marriage to Herman, studying in Europe under the famed Artur Schnabel. And their eldest son, Armin, was himself a violin virtuoso, having studied under all of the above-mentioned names save one, David Oistrakh, though *that* had been 'the plan' for 1956. Herman and Armin were scheduled to travel to Moscow, where Herman would play chess exhibitions and possibly a match (opponent unknown), while Armin would study under Oistrakh at the Moscow Conservatory. That obviously never happened. In fact, after Herman's death Armin ultimately gave up the violin, even parting ways with the early 18th century *Carlo Tononi* violin given him by Gregor Piatigorsky.

There is no question that Herman loved the limelight and social glitz of Hollywood. He was a natural showman, after all, and could easily have transitioned into film in 1933 had he wished to. In fact, over the years his movie pals frequently requested him as a consultant on movie sets with chess scenes, and occasionally asked him to do small parts. Curiously, he usually declined! And that includes the most infamous role he was offered.

Herman as Hitler?

One of the oft-repeated anecdotes about Steiner (and there are many) is that he once played Adolf Hitler in a movie, due to his slight resemblance to the dictator when his hair and mustache were done right.

But did it happen? I always found it odd that no actual film title is ever given; no date, no director, and not a single movie clip! Really? For years I searched for *any* confirmation of this event, without success. In Charles Mitchell's definitive work, *The Hitler Filmography* (2003), there is no mention of Herman Steiner playing the role. And neither is he credited any-

where in the Internet Movie database (IMDb), not only for the Hitler role but for *any* role, though that in itself means little since non-speaking minor roles were often uncredited. There is no mention of it even in Herman's chess column, where you would expect *some* mention. And while Herman's sons had heard this rumor, neither could provide a definitive answer. Eugene (the youngest son) did recall one suggestive detail. 'One day I saw my dad standing in front of a mirror wearing a dark military style uniform, consistent with what the Nazis wore', Eugene said. 'He seemed disgruntled with his image and mumbled something to himself in Hungarian, and that's the last I ever saw of it.'

The only logical conclusion was that it never happened. Herman was probably *asked* to do the part, but after seeing himself in the mirror – and being Jewish – he simply could not, in good conscience, go through with it.

Just recently, quite by chance, I stumbled upon an article by Juan Morgado covering the Najdorf-Reshevsky match and the Mar del Plata tournament in Argentina 1953. Morgado cited an article from the March 7, 1953 edition of *El Mundo*, in which Herman Steiner (who was playing in the tournament) had been interviewed by a local reporter. Roughly translated it reads:
'The Second World War was ending. There was an urgent need in Hollywood film studios for someone to play the role of Adolf Hitler, chancellor of Germany. 'We've got it! We know precisely who to get,' they said, 'the chess champion of the Pacific coast will be acting in movies with Charles Boyer and other stars.' Opposing them across the chessboard, he has already demonstrated his calmness and concentration while working out intricate combinations. The Pacific coast champion, Herman Steiner, with the same mustache and his hair combed the same, has a rare likeness to the former dictator. But in the end he refused to play the part. The studios argued strongly but his ideological convictions were stronger than their offers of money.'

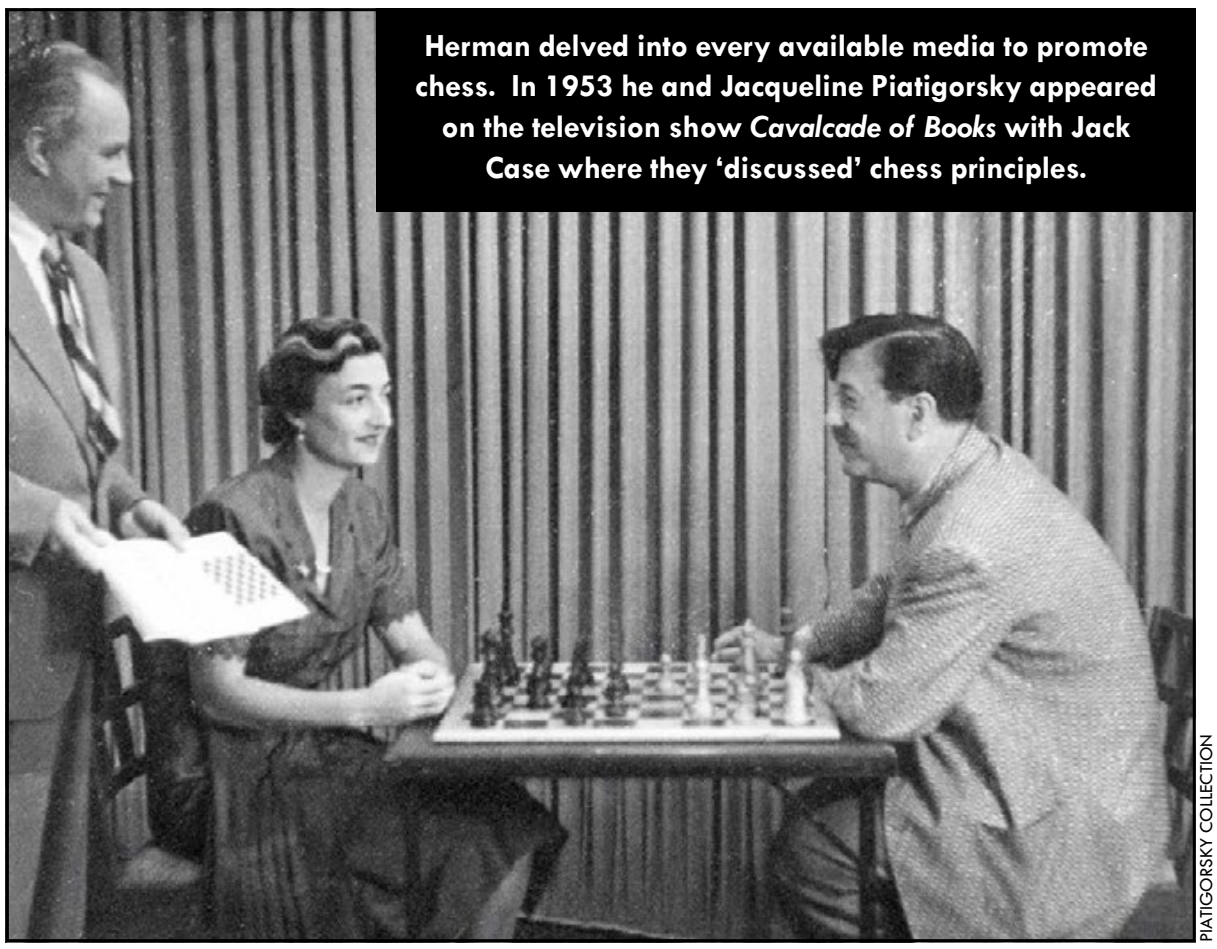
'In fact, he was one of the first true "chess professionals" at a time when that term was meaningless for all but a handful of players in the world.'

Confirmed at last! Some may be disappointed that the anecdote is false, but it's actually a tribute to Herman's character – money isn't everything.

Chess Entrepreneur

As strong a player as Herman was, it was as teacher, promoter and organizer that he really excelled, especially in the U.S., where his tireless efforts were responsible for nearly doubling membership in the U.S. Chess Federation. He was a true ambassador of the game. In fact, he was one of the first true 'chess professionals' at a time when that term was meaningless for all but a handful of players in the world. Actually, 'chess entrepreneur' is probably a better term since so much of what he did occurred *off* the board.

Herman was a gifted teacher, no question about it. He had literally hundreds of students over the years from every social class in society. In fact, income from chess lessons was the bread & butter of his club. But he wasn't a teacher in the strictest definition, certainly not in the same sense as 'The Botvinnik School', which strikes mortal fear just saying it. Giving lessons to Charles Boyer, for example, might involve a couple of martinis and go something like this: 'Look, Chuck, I don't give a rat's ass how many 'takes' you get in the movies, on the chessboard if you touch a piece you move it! And for God's sake, stop



Herman delved into every available media to promote chess. In 1953 he and Jacqueline Piatigorsky appeared on the television show *Cavalcade of Books* with Jack Case where they 'discussed' chess principles.

PIATIGORSKY COLLECTION

moving your rook-pawn on the first move!' For someone like Jacqueline Piatigorsky, chess instruction had more subtlety, dealing with issues of confidence and learning how to think, and even how to 'love the game even when you lose', as Jacqueline put it. To Herman, chess itself was a *life* lesson, with real meaning, real value.

Chess for the Millions?

It is well known that Herman edited the *Los Angeles Times* chess column for more than 20 years. What is *not* well known is that he also wrote at least one and possibly even two chess books!

In 1948 Herman was U.S. champion and wanted to publish a book to capitalize on that status. All evidence suggests he did. In the *Book Buyer's Guide* for 1949, page 188, there is a listing for a new book by Herman Steiner, due out November 1st. The title: *Chess for the Millions.*

STEINER COLLECTION

Signature chess equipment: the *Herman Steiner Master Chess Set*, the *Steiner Timer* electronic chess clock, and the *Herman Steiner Chess Table*, crafted of walnut and bird's eye maple.

The title evidently carries on a hypothetical discussion in *BCM*, between early 19th century chess writers and rivals William Lewis and George Walker on the market viability of expensive vs cheaper books in terms of mass-market appeal. A price war had ensued where each one-upped (or rather one-downed) the other with a less expensive book, Lewis' *Chess for Beginners* was followed by Walker's *Chess Made Easy*, and this followed by Lewis' *Chess Board Companion* which cost a mere half crown. Walker gave in. 'It was clear,' he said, 'that if I carried on the war with *Chess for the Masses*, at a shilling, my competitor would rejoin with a sixpenny *Chess for the Millions.*'

It makes sense that this would resonate with Steiner. He really *did* want to teach chess 'to the millions.' He believed it made people better in their daily lives.

According to the Library of Congress no such book exists, and attempts to track it down through the original publisher, *Ziff-Davis*, have proven fruitless. Most likely the book was never actually published, or if it was it was never released. But the manuscript definitely existed.

In the program of the 1955 U.S. Open, just three months prior to

Judit Polgar's Chess Set, by DGT

Fine handcrafted set, specially selected by Judit Polgar
A very personal selection of chess pieces
Packed in a beautiful wooden box
Chess board signed 'Polgar Judit – the Queen of Chess'

Judit Polgar chess pieces:
King height 95 mm (3.74") with two extra queens

Judit Polgar Chess Board:
500 x 500 x 13mm (19.7" x 19.7" x .51")
Tournament size squares:
55 x 55 mm (2.17" x 2.17")

DGT

normal price: board €139, pieces €89
special New In Chess price: board + pieces = ~~€228~~ €199
www.newinchess.com

Herman's death, we are told of Steiner's impending 'book on chess, soon to be published.' It is possible this is the *same* book from 1949, edited and expanded.

Tragically, the manuscript has vanished! It went missing a few months after Herman's death. There was some hope that it would be found somewhere in Jacqueline Piatigorsky's archives, but no such luck.

Inventor & Designer

Herman was also a gifted designer and inventor. He created the first fully electronic chess clock, the so-called 'Steiner Timer.' The unique aspect of this patented clock was that in addition to keeping the times electronically, it also had counters that recorded the number of moves made. While this would eventually be disallowed as a rules violation, it was nevertheless utilized in several of Herman's matches, including his 1952 U.S. Championship match against Larry Evans.

He also designed a signature chess set – the *Herman Steiner Master Chess Set* – which is probably the most filmed set of all time. Innumerable photos of Reshevsky appear with this set from his many simultaneous exhibitions in Los Angeles. It was also featured in every major tournament or match played in southern California through at least the 1960s, including Herman's U.S. Championship matches of 1946 and 1952 against Arnold Denker and Larry Evans respectively, as well as part of his 1947 match against Reuben Fine, and the 1952 Hollywood International (won by Gligoric). Following his death Jacqueline Piatigorsky carried on the tradition with her sponsorship of the 1961 Fischer-Reshevsky match, the legendary Piatigorsky Cup tournaments, as well as the Reshevsky-Hort-Stein Interzonal playoff match tournament in 1968. All of these events and others used Herman's chess sets! Perhaps most famously, the set was immortalized on the silver screen in the movie *Cass Timberlane* (1947), starring Spencer Tracy and Lana Turner, which included chess scenes choreographed by Herman himself.

Promoter & Visionary

Herman's people skills were extraordinary. He could easily navigate almost any social dynamic; whether talking with heads of state, movie stars, politicians, or gypsy peasants in his native Hungary, he was right at home. He had little difficulty soliciting support for events he promoted, and not just monetary support but their time, actually getting big-name people directly involved in chess venues to support polio victims, wounded veterans, British war relief and countless other causes. This is what made him different.

Herman and Selma, Hollywood 1939.

Even today, Steiner's ideas live on in marquis events like the *Sinquefield Cup* in St. Louis, which found much of its inspiration in the famous Piatigorsky Cup tournaments of the 1960s. Those famed tournaments were not born in a vacuum. While Jacqueline Piatigorsky had played chess since her childhood in France, it was not until she met Herman Steiner that she had her *chess epiphany*. She learned the emotional and psychological tolls the game inflicts, notably from the many letters Herman sent her during his travels to international tournaments. She learned about all aspects of tournament life, from the player's perspective as well as the director, promoter and spectator. Most importantly, she learned about chess as a powerful tool in philanthropy, especially for children. She learned this from Herman Steiner, who was not only her teacher but, as she herself says, 'the best friend [she] ever had.' It was Jacqueline who took over Herman's 'Hollywood Chess Group' after his death and re-christened it the 'Herman Steiner Chess Club'. In this light it is hardly surprising that the Piatigorsky Cup tournaments had Herman Steiner written into their DNA, from the *Herman Steiner Chess Club*, to Isaac Kashdan as tournament director, to the *Herman Steiner Master Chess Sets* and tables used in the events.

Where chess was concerned, Steiner's hand was everywhere. No one – no one – did more, cared more, or lived the part more than he did. He was a true chess entrepreneur and philanthropist. When we speak of tenured figures in American chess like Herman Helms, George Koltanowski, Arnold Denker, and most recently Arthur Bisguier, we rightly adorn them the title 'Dean of American Chess' for their contributions. But Herman Steiner's contributions to American chess warranted that title even during his short lifetime. He was *that* important. ■

Reader reactions

Readers who have information about Herman Steiner's 'lost manuscript', the whereabouts of many of his early scoresheets, or any other information that may be of interest to his biographer, can contact Bruce Monson at: bamonson@pcisys.net

Letter from China

Ding Liren: ‘Maybe I’m just a little stream or a little hill in front of him and it’s just a matter of time for Wei Yi to pass me.’

In another ‘Letter from China’, **JILIN ZHANG** reports on Ding Liren’s match victory over Boris Gelfand, and the unambiguous victory of her fellow-countrymen and women in the 9th China-Russia match. Our correspondent’s talk with Ding Liren completes her interviews with ‘The Three Musketeers’ that started with Wei Yi and Yu Yangyi in our previous issues. In the past month, Ding Liren strengthened his position as China’s number one, rising to seventh place in the live ratings, but with admirable honesty he declares that only 16-year-old Wei Yi may bring his country the individual world title.

In the lobby of the five-star Fuhao Dongya Hotel, the murmur of conversation and a piano player crooning romantic songs in the bar are the only sounds to break the silence. Ding Liren walks in looking relaxed and wearing a pink shirt and beach shorts. He has just arrived in Shanghai for another round of the Chinese League and has been to his room to take a shower. 'I actually love to take a shower before playing chess, because it gets me into the right mood and makes me feel ready and refreshed.' Now he wanted to freshen up after a long subway ride from the airport. When he is travelling with the national team, there is normally a car to pick him up. In the absence of this luxury he had hailed an unofficial taxi outside the airport, but the driver angered him by asking a ridiculously high fare. Annoyed, he decided to take the subway, but it was a long and sweaty trip, especially as he forgot to get off at a stop where he had to change trains.

As he sits down, he happily tells me about the short match that he just won in his home city of Wenzhou in south-eastern Zhejiang Province, against Boris Gelfand. 'The match celebrated the 20th anniversary of Wenzhou Chess City. Five years ago, for the 15th anniversary, I played a match against Bu Xiangzhi that very few people know about. We played two standard games and two rapid games, and I lost 1-3. Back then the prize-money wasn't very high. I remember getting only 1000+ dollars. This time the winner got 20,000 dollars and the loser 10,000. My opponent was selected by Mr. Ye [Ye Jiangchuan, the head coach of the Chinese Chess Federation – ed.]. He was considering Gelfand, Svidler or Adams, as they are more mature and experienced than the younger generation. When I heard it would be Gelfand, I looked at all his games and studied his recent favourite opening lines.'

The match consisted of four classical games. After two draws Gelfand lost Games 3 and 4. It was said that his play in those games might have been affected by a foot injury.

FAN LULU

'I actually love to take a shower before playing chess, because it gets me into the right mood and makes me feel ready and refreshed.'

'Right after the second game, he decided to go for a walk on a nearby mountain. Actually this mountain is near my grandma's place, I often went there when I was a kid. It's a popular place for local people to relax. I don't know how his foot got hurt. Before the third round he wanted to see a doctor. During the game his facial expression suggested he might be in pain, but it's hard to tell, as he never smiles during a game. The journalists also think that he is always very serious during the game. So I don't know if he was affected by this. In the evening of the second round, he proposed to have a rest day instead of Round 3. But the schedule had already been published and to be honest, I didn't want to postpone the game either.

'The quality of his 3rd and 4th games was not very good; definitely not his normal level. In the third game, he spent a lot of time thinking in the opening. It was not a very uncommon line, many people have played it, but he spent, like, 20 to 30 minutes on one move. I played all my moves within five minutes, because it was all about my plan and the position didn't require a lot of calculation. But after each of my moves he would think for a long time. I commented on this game for New In Chess.'

He says that his expectations before the match had been modest. A 2-2 tie or a 2½-1½ win for either player seemed to be a normal result. He certainly hadn't expected to win 3-1, and he expresses his amazement about his 2759 rating after the match against Gelfand. In the final game, his position was slightly worse at some point and he didn't think his victory was very convincing.

Perhaps he is being too modest. When I mentioned Ding Liren's doubts to Ni Hua, the experienced grandmaster replied that he had been absolutely convinced that Ding would beat Gelfand. And about Ding Liren's future he opined: 'If he gets to play enough quality tournaments, I am pretty sure that he will make the top-5.'

Ding Liren's uncertainty about his high rating also turned out to be unfounded. He won all four games that he played in the Shanghai leg of the Chinese League, taking his rating to an impressive 2770. [And

he repeated this feat in the next leg, which finished the day before this issue went to press: again winning all four games, taking his rating to 2781.6 and shooting up to 7th place in the live ratings – ed.].

Guarantee for life

Ding Liren started to play chess at the age of 4, when he knew how to move the pieces and could complete a whole game. His mother helped him with middlegame exercises. From an early age on he would be the leading player among his peers and he took first place in the national youth championships six or seven times, he doesn't recall exactly. 'Until high school, I was half studying and half playing chess, as in Wenzhou nobody wanted to give up school. I remember that one time, when our team didn't play well in the National Team Championship, a journalist commented on the gap between professionals and amateurs. That made a deep impression on me.'

'For me it's just a piece of paper. I won't become a lawyer or anything anyway. Actually, I am not interested in law at all.'

Actually, it was his mother who didn't want him to quit school, just like she didn't want to give up her job as a nurse (his father is a manager in the Electricity Department) to keep him company. The idea was that it would not put pressure on him if he lost games, because even if he didn't do well in chess, he would always have his studies.

Things changed when he entered high school, became National Youth Champion and entered the National Team. 'I started to play more and study less. Actually, I wanted to quit so I could concentrate fully on playing. But my mom disagreed. She said that at least I should finish high school – which I did, although I no longer went there as a regular student. Of course we would fight, but in the end she would always prevail, mainly because I got good marks at school. To anyone it seemed a pity not to continue with such marks.'

His parents still take decisions for him and they insist that he continues his studies at the Law Department of Beijing University, where he is now in his third year – even though he doesn't share their views. 'For my parents, it's a sort of guarantee for life. I considered quitting university, but they think people who helped me to enter Beijing University would be disappointed. I don't know if I can graduate or not, the exams are very difficult. For me it's just a piece of paper. I won't become a lawyer or anything anyway. Actually, I am not interested in law at all. I still need at least five years to graduate now. I feel like it's a waste of time, just staying there to memorize books for an exam and after the exam it's all forgotten. It's all just for a piece of paper that is of no use to me. The only benefit is that I can read there quietly, but not study books; to be by myself there where it is calm, instead of being in the noisy world.'

Exploiting Boris Gelfand's shaky play in Games 3 and 4, Ding Liren emerged victorious (3-1) in his home city of Wenzhou and pocketed the $20,000 winner's fee.

The next step

Ding Liren was on the Chinese national team that won the Olympiad and the World Teams Championship. In women's chess our country has already won everything, including the individual world title. This is the final step the men now have to take and Ye Jiangchuan has already speculated openly about the possibilities. Of course, Ding Liren, too, hopes that one day a Chinese player will claim the highest title, but he is

not sure about his own chances. 'To win the World Cup is one thing, but going all the way and win the Candidates' tournament and eventually to beat Carlsen would be too difficult.' He doesn't disagree when I suggest that Wei Yi may overtake him and ultimately have a shot at the world title. 'You know it's very interesting. Before our game in the national championship, I was sitting opposite him and sat there thinking: Maybe I'm just a little stream or a little hill in front of him, and it's just matter of time for Wei Yi to pass me, just like I used to overtake other players. It's only natural. On the other hand, it's difficult to say whether he will be able to seriously challenge Carlsen one day. But right now I don't see anyone else that has got more potential than him.'

Although he occasionally goes to tournaments alone, Ding Liren very much prefers to travel in the company of Wei Yi and the others. 'There is no comparison, we get along so well. But sometimes I go to invitational tournaments by myself. My English is fine for simple talk and to discuss games with the other players. But I don't actually build friendships with other players. Wang Hao is better at this, he likes to talk.'

But he did get invited by Magnus Carlsen to join the World Champion in a training camp in Doha earlier this year. This was probably supposed to remain a secret, but when Ding Liren happened to mention it in an interview with a Chinese newspaper, the news rapidly travelled the world. Of course I ask him what kind of experience it was, but he says that it would be inappropriate to go into any kind of detail.

When finally we speak about his favourite pastimes and preferences, it becomes clear that he shares at least one passion with Carlsen, as basketball is definitely his favourite sport. He also used to play football, and when he is in a hotel he likes to play ping-pong, badminton and pool.

As for food, he also likes Western food: seafood and steak. And at home he enjoys his mother's cooking. She handles many things for him and also purchases his clothes. With a laugh he adds: 'I'm unqualified for daily life.'

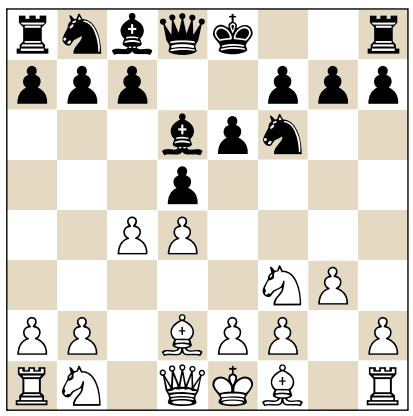
And when pushed to reveal any special habits he says: 'I like to sleep on the wall-side of the bed. Push the bed against the wall. I also like to put my knights with their heads turned to face each other. I think every player has a fixed way to put their knights.'

And finally I cannot suppress my female curiosity when I ask him what would be his ideal girl to build a family with. 'I haven't thought about when to get married yet. But we have to be able to communicate and appreciate each other. (Laughs) I like the 80's love. Very classical and pure.'

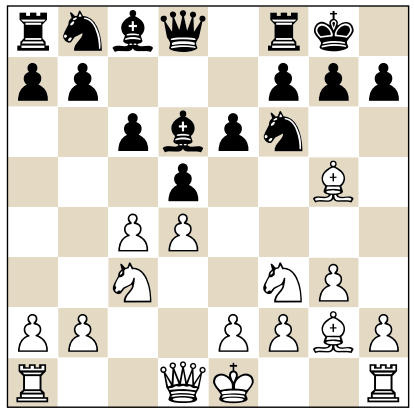
NOTES BY
Ding Liren

CA 1.3 – E01
Boris Gelfand
Ding Liren
Wenzhou 2015 (3)

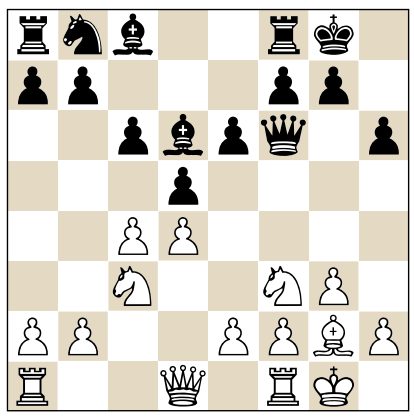
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗d6
I wanted to surprise my opponent in the opening, so I chose an uncommon line.



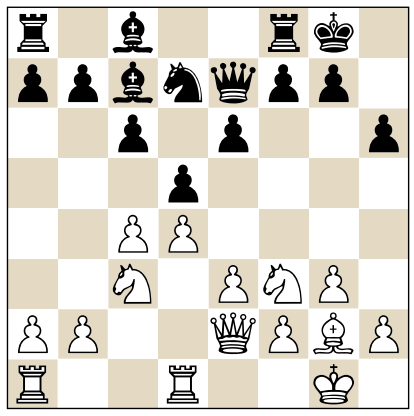
6.♘c3
Another possibility was 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.♕c2 ♘bd7.
6...0-0 7.♗g5 c6 8.♗g2



8...h6 This was my idea. I want to keep the bishop pair and try to find chances in a passive but flexible position. The main variation is 8...♘bd7 9.e4 dxe4 10.♘xe4 ♗b4+ 11.♘c3, when thanks to the e4-break, White has the initiative.
9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.0-0



10...♗c7 When facing the e4-break, Black normally replies ...dxc4. The withdrawal of the bishop aims to avoid the possibility of 11.c5 and then 12.e4. Trying to simplify the position with 10...dxc4 11.♘e4 ♕e7 12.♘xd6 ♕xd6 13.♘e5 b5 14.a4 ♗a6 15.♖c1 is not good for Black.
On 10...♖d8 White goes 11.e4, and after 10...♕e7 11.c5 ♗c7 the logical follow-up is also 12.e4.
11.e3 ♘d7 12.♕e2 ♕e7 13.♖fd1



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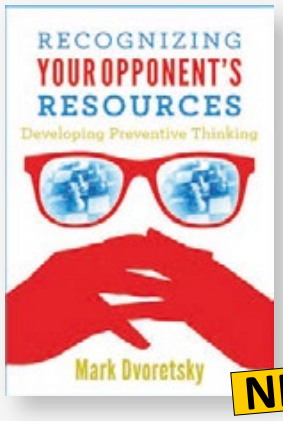

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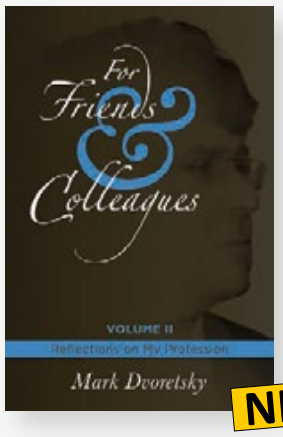

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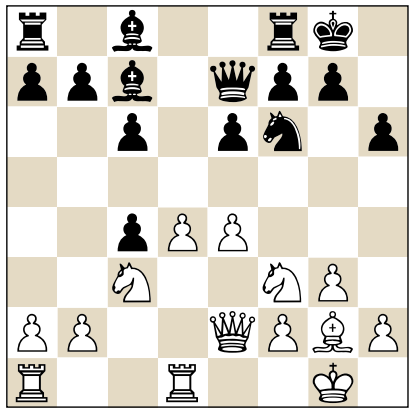
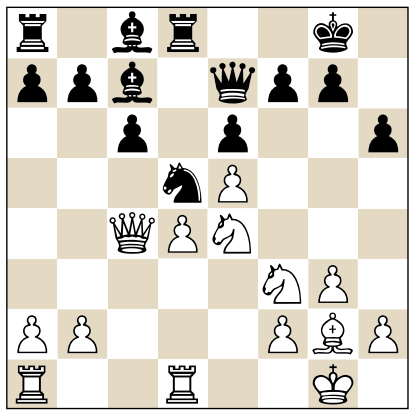
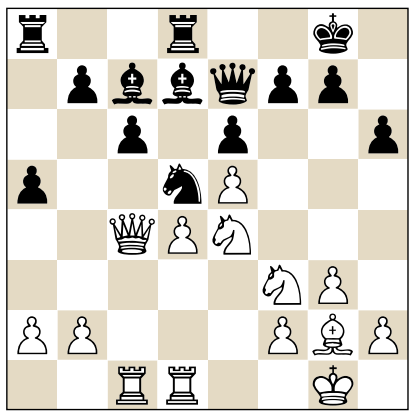
13...♘f6 More precise was 13...♖d8 14.e4 dxc4 15.♕xc4 ♘b6 16.♕e2 a5.
14.e4 dxc4



15.e5
If White wants to gain an advantage, the e5-push is a necessity. After 15.♕xc4 ♖d8 16.♖ac1 e5 17.♘xe5 ♗e6 18.♕e2 (18.♘d5 ♕d6) 18...♗xe5 19.dxe5 ♘g4 chances are equal.
15...♘d5 16.♕xc4 ♖d8 17.♘e4

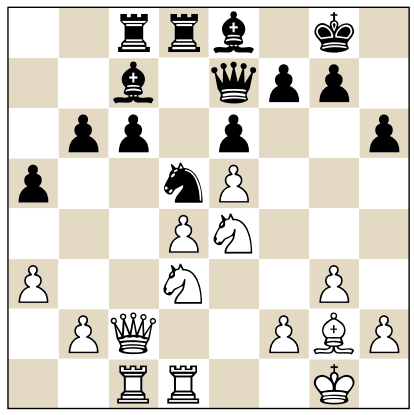


17...a5 The alternative was 17...♗d7 18.♖ac1 b6.
18.♖ac1 ♗d7



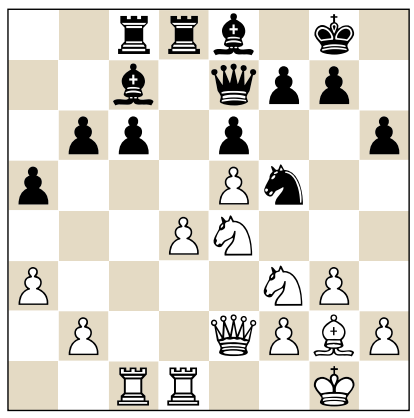
19.a3 I played very fast in the opening phase, making him feel some time-pressure.
From this move onwards, my opponent somehow lost direction.

Here, 19.♘c5 does not work because of 19...♗c8 20.a3 b6.
A better plan would be 19.♕e2 ♗e8 20.♘fd2, threatening ♘c4-d6.
19...♗e8 20.♘e1 b6 21.♘d3
Better was 21.♕e2.
21...♖ac8 22.♕c2



22...♕f8 I was planning to play ...♘e7-f5, but better was 22...♗b8 23.♕e2 ♖d7 24.♘d2 (24.♕g4 ♔h8) 24...♕d8 25.♗e4 ♘e7 26.♘f3 c5!, and the position is equal.
23.♕e2 ♘e7 24.♘e1 ♘f5 25.♘f3

25...♕e7?
A serious mistake. I overestimated my position and moved without thinking. I should have played 25...♘e7 or 25...♗b8 when White can continue 26.g4 ♘e7 27.g5.

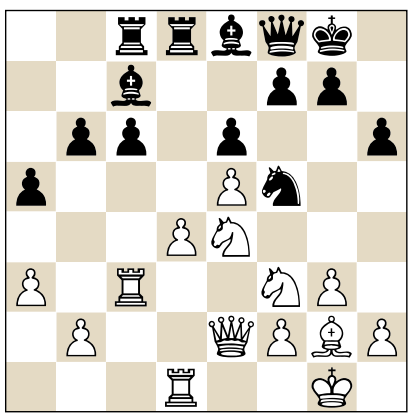


26.♖c3

Here he missed his best chance: 26.g4! ♘h4 27.♘xh4 ♕xh4 28.♖c3 h5 (White is clearly better after 28...f5 29.exf6 ♕xh2+ 30.♔f1, with a crushing attack after 28...c5 29.♖h3 ♕e7 30.g5 ♖xd4 31.♘f6+) 29.f4.

26...♕f8

And I realized my mistake.



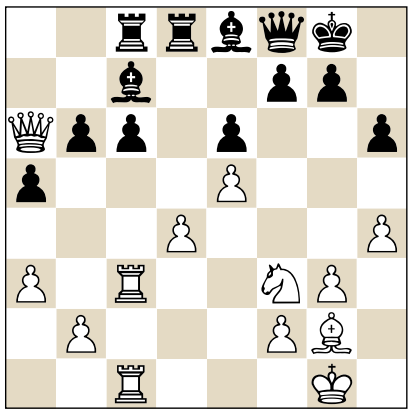
27.h4

Under time-pressure, he hesitated. He should have continued the attack with 27.g4! ♘e7 28.g5 ♘d5 (28...h5 29.♘h4) 29.gxh6 f5 30.hxg7 ♕xg7 31.♘f6+ ♘xf6 32.exf6 ♕xf6 33.♖e3, and White is slightly better.

27...♘e7

The position is even again.

28.♖cc1 ♗b8 29.♕a6 ♘d5 30.♘c3 ♘xc3 31.♖xc3 ♗c7 32.♖dc1



32...♖b8!

To avoid the pin. I would like to break with ...b5 or ...c5, depending on the circumstances. After 32...b5 White goes 33.♘e1.

33.♕e2

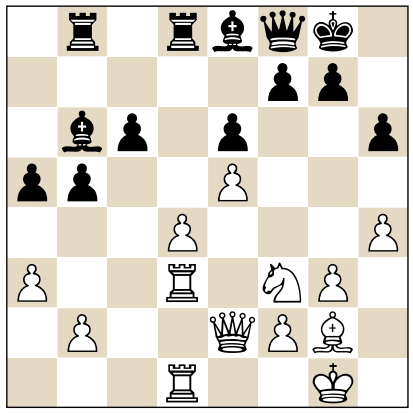
Here he offered a draw. I thought I was no longer in any danger, so I refused.

Ding Liren tries to read the expression on the face of Boris Gelfand, who, according to the local press, 'always looks very serious during the game'.

33...b5 34.♖d3

More solid was 34.♘e1 ♗b6 35.♗xc6 ♗xd4 36.♖3c2 b4 37.♗xe8 ♕xe8 38.♘f3.

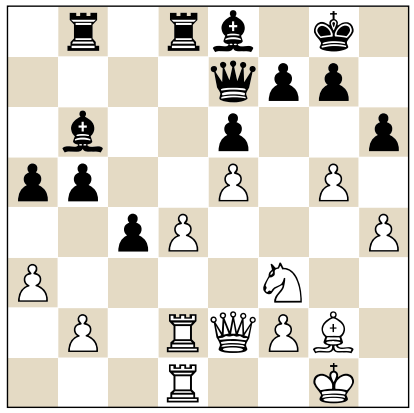
34...♗b6 35.♖cd1



35...♕e7

During the game I wasn't very certain whether I would get an advantage with 35...c5, as the position is very complex. A possible line would be 35...c5 36.d5 c4 37.♖3d2 ♖xd5 38.♖xd5 exd5 39.♖xd5 c3! 40.bxc3 ♕xa3 41.e6 ♕xc3 42.exf7+ ♗xf7 43.♘e5! ♖e8 44.♕xb5 ♕e1+ 45.♔h2, which should be better for Black.

36.g4!? c5 37.g5 c4 38.♖3d2



38...h5! In case of 38...♗c6 39.gxh6 gxh6 40.♘h2 ♗xg2 41.♔xg2 ♕xh4 42.♘g4 White would have some counterattack on the kingside.

39.g6 f6!

Controlling the key square g5.

Wenzhou 2015

					1	2	3	4		TPR
1	**Ding Liren**	IGM	CHN	2749	½	½	1	1	3	**2944**
2	**Boris Gelfand**	IGM	ISR	2751	½	½	0	0	1	**2556**

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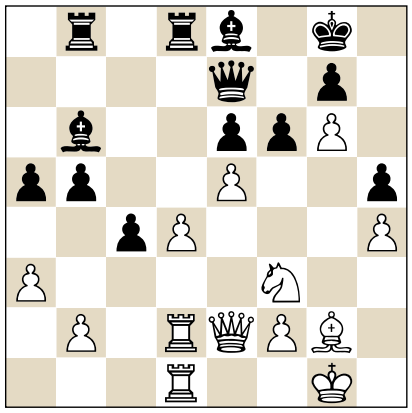
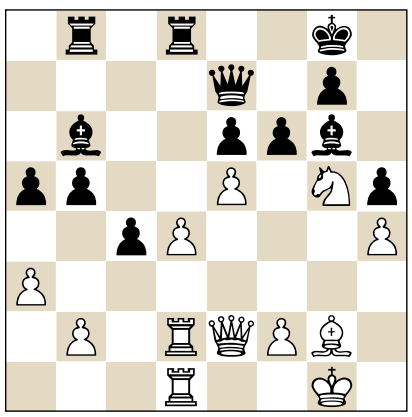


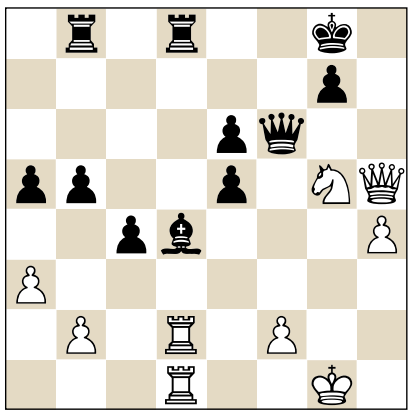
40.♘g5!? After 40.exf6 gxf6 41.d5 ♗xg6 42.d6 ♕f7 Black is much better. Interesting was 40.♕e4!? b4 41.axb4 axb4 42.d5 c3 43.bxc3 bxc3 44.♖c2 (44.d6 ♕b7) 44...♗c6!, and Black maintains the pressure.

40...♗xg6



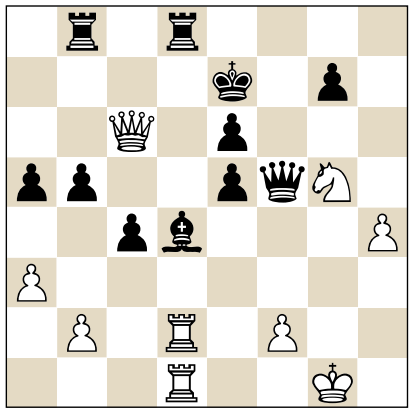
41.♗e4? A mistake. Maybe he had miscalculated my 44th move. Best was 41.exf6 ♕xf6 42.♗e4!, to keep pressing on the kingside (after 42.♘xe6 ♖d6 43.d5 ♖c8 the active bishop pair gives Black a clear advantage).

41...♗xe4 42.♘xe4 fxe5 43.♕xh5 ♗xd4! 44.♘g5 ♕f6!



The battle is over. I am two pawns up, and his attack is no longer threatening.

45.♕h7+ ♔f8 46.♕e4 ♔e7 47.♕c6 ♕f5

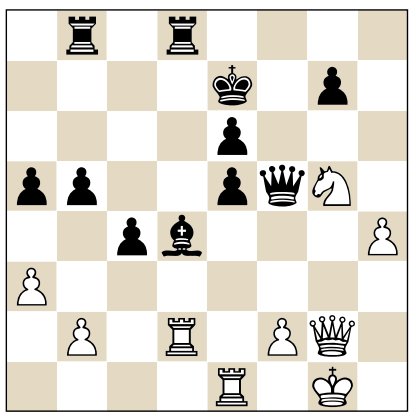


48.♖e1

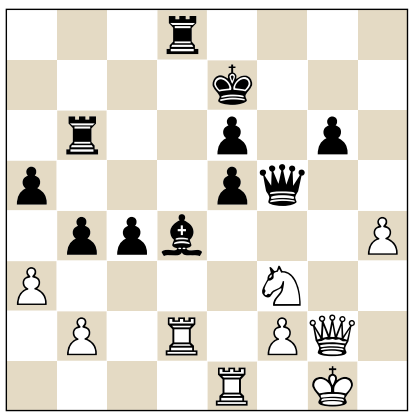
No relief is brought by 48.♖xd4 exd4 49.♖e1 ♔f8 50.♘xe6+ ♔g8 51.♘xd8 ♖xd8, and the black passer will decide the issue.

48...♖dc8 49.♕g2 ♖d8

Simplest was 49...c3 50.♖xd4 c2.



50.♕c6 ♖b6 51.♕g2 g6 52.♘f3 b4!

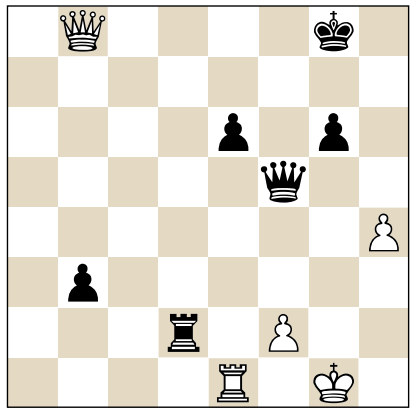


I found the winning plan.

53.axb4 axb4 54.♖de2 c3 55.bxc3 ♗xc3 56.♘xe5 ♗xe1 57.♖xe1 b3!

And not 57...♔f6?! 58.♖e3 b3 59.♖f3, when Black might stumble into a perpetual check.

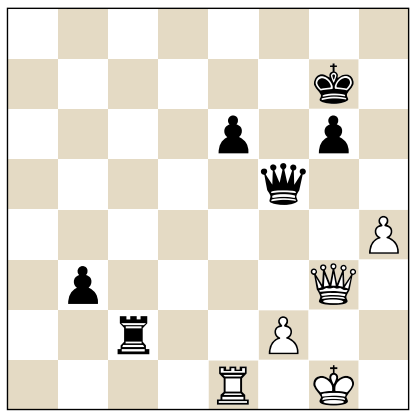
58.♘c6+ ♖xc6 59.♕xc6 ♖d2 60.♕c7+ ♔f8 61.♕c8+ ♔f7 62.♕c7+ ♔g8 63.♕b8+



63...♔g7 As 63...♔h7 was impossible because of 64.♕a7+ ♔h6 65.♕e3+.

64.♕g3 Toughest was 64.♕c7+, but after 64...♔h6 65.♕g3 ♖d3 66.♕b8 ♕f6! 67.♖xe6 ♕d4! Black also wins.

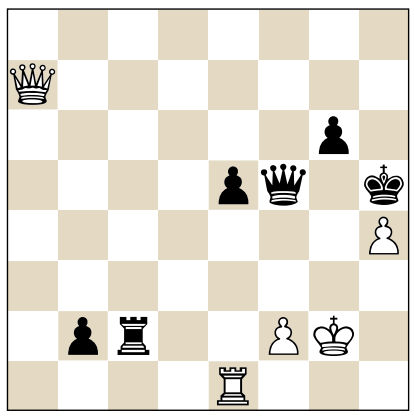
64...♖c2



65.♕e3 After 65.♖e5 b2 66.♖xf5 b1♕+ 67.♔h2 exf5 68.♕e5+ ♔f7 69.♕d5+ ♔e7 70.♕e5+ ♔d7 71.♕d4+ ♔c8 there is no perpetual.

65...b2 The rest is simple.

66.♕a7+ ♔h6 67.♕e3+ ♔h5 68.♔g2 e5 69.♕a7



69...♔h6 Faster was 69...e4.

70.♕e3+ ♕f4 71.♕xf4+ exf4 72.♖b1 ♔h5 73.♔f3 ♔xh4 74.♖h1+ ♔g5 75.♖b1 ♖d2

White resigned.

■ ■ ■

China beats Russia 29-21

The tradition of the 'annual' China-Russia matches started in Shanghai in 2001. For this ninth encounter the city of Ningbo was the host. Russia's loss could partly be attributed to the absence of their biggest stars, but then, both China's men's and women's teams lacked some of their leading players as well, as **JILIN ZHANG** notes in the second part of her Letter from China.

Top-scorers on the Chinese teams were Bu Xiangzhi (men) and Shen Yang (women), who both agreed to annotate their best game.

Although they are only 29 and 26 years old respectively, they achieved their first successes many years ago and both can be seen as experienced veterans. Bu Xiangzhi was China's first real prodigy, and when he became a grandmaster in 1999, he was the youngest one in the world at the time, at the age of 13 years, 10 months and 13 days. After the match I asked him to share his thoughts on this match, the past and the future.

'In the early years of the China-Russia matches we felt that we were mentally not yet ready for that level, but after we took 5th place in the 2002 Olympiad our confidence gradually grew. In 2007, I won my final game against Tomashevsky with White. We won that final round 4-1, and it was the first time we overtook the Russian team in the overall score and beat them. Although it was just a regular match, we were all so excited. Having beaten them in a match, we felt we had the power to beat any team in the world. Even though top players like Kramnik didn't play, they still were all around 2700 back then.

'I wasn't planning on playing this year, but we have a new rule that players that compete in the World Team Championship must also represent China in this match.

'In this team, Lu Shanglei and Wang Chen had relatively low ratings, but they did well, especially Wang Chen. He lost only one game. Their opponents were probably not familiar with their style of play. Also, our Three Musketeers have grown, and we will be able to rely on them in the future. Hopefully there will be more young talented players coming up. One more thing to mention is that we won both in blitz and in standard chess in both the men's and the women's competitions this time.

'Unity has always been the key for the Chinese team. Even when our ratings were low, we could play powerful games.'

'Unity has always been the key for the Chinese team. Even when our ratings were low, we could play powerful games. This tradition started with Ye Jiangchuan, Xu Jun, Zhang Zhong, Peng Xiaomin, Zhang Pengxiang and also Liang Chong. Ni Hua and I were able to carry on this tradition. It was a shame that I could not represent China at the Tromsø Olympiad. But I was very happy for them. We are one Chinese Team, so it's no big deal who participated and who didn't. Most important is that the Chinese men's team won, bringing glory to all Chinese male players. The same goes for the World Team Championship. Those who play will try their best and those who do not play will try their best to help in any possible way.

A potent mix of (mainly) youth and experience brought the Chinese men victory (14-11) over Russia. (L. to r.) Wang Chen, Wei Yi, Xu Yun (coach), Tian Hongwei (Chinese Chess Association), Lu Shanglei, Bu Xiangzhi and Yu Yangyi.

And of course there are coaches and friends in China who are also trying to help prepare and analyse or provide material. Without these factors, we wouldn't be where we are today.

'Winning the individual world title will be hard, but we're catching up with the others. That day may come. It's like a paper window; you just need to go through it. Of course we need some more help, our players now pretty much train by themselves. Players like Carlsen and Nakamura all have sponsors and hired coaches. Perhaps some countries value chess more and their players get better conditions. Hopefully one day we will have sponsors as well.

'I remember when in 2002 we were training in Tianjin and our national team hired (Valery) Salov to be our coach for a month. We got some training from him; not only strategy and chess methods, but also physical aspects. We would do lots of physical exercises, like football. We would play in the morning and finish lunch in just a few minutes because we were all so hungry. After lunch we'd train the entire afternoon and again go for sports. We had a great time and we certainly learned a lot of things outside chess. Energy is pretty important in World Championship matches. You have to have a strong body to stay alert.

'Yes, I certainly still think back sometimes to how it all began. It was by accident that I saw my grandpa playing chess against my cousin. I was a naughty boy and that's why when my parents found out that I was interested in chess, they were happy that I would sit there quietly for a while and wouldn't get hurt by doing other things. It's like that; there are lots of coincidences in life. For example, around that time the Qing Dao Daily chess team was established. The Chief Editor, Mr. Jiang, also had a son who was studying chess. He supported our team financially. Back then our economy wasn't strong and it would have been quite difficult for us to play international events if it hadn't been for him supporting us. They also hired famous Chinese coaches to help us. Otherwise we would have just been a couple of kids playing together. And more importantly, they believed in me. In 1999, I spent the whole year overseas. A coach and a journalist would follow me everywhere, as they thought I had the potential to go for youngest grandmaster ever. Actually, I've always wanted to become World Champion one day. I even drew a painting of myself which my mother still keeps. The first six months didn't go smoothly. I achieved no GM norms but collected more than enough IM norms. In the second six months, I got two GM norms and then, back in my hometown of Qingdao, I achieved the 3rd norm in the Qingdao Open. But just in case one of them wouldn't count, I played one more tournament later and made my fourth norm to make sure to gain the GM title.

After I became the youngest GM, I felt much more pressure. It's nothing now, many kids can get it, but back then, it was something different. I was worried that my strength would not match my fame. But after several tournaments I kept my rating, which proved that I was strong enough. And in 2000, I was called to train in the national team.

'I was a very smart kid, but I never learned how to be hardworking. Sometimes I think that if I had put in more effort, things might have been different. But it's also a conflict: if I care too much, I might be too nervous and mean to myself and wouldn't achieve anything.

'I am thankful for the opportunities I got and, most importantly, the support from our country. They value me and give me the chance to represent China. If I hadn't played in the World Team Championship this year, things would have been different. Also, our country supports a lot of our travelling. Earlier this year they paid for my trip to America. All this support helped me grow. Soon I will not be involved much in the national team anymore, but as long as our country needs me, I will try my best.

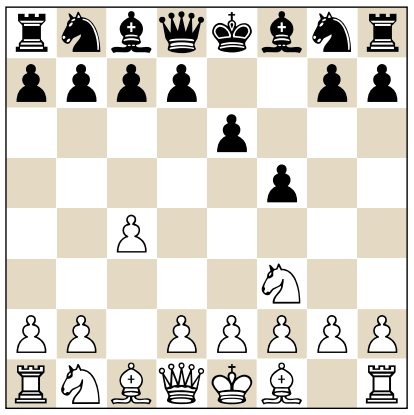
'Yes, I am close to 30 years old now and I will be more focused on family life. My career is okay now. I get to play the League and I am head coach of Shandong Province. Next I will be settled and spend more time with my family. Honour my parents, build a healthy marriage with my wife. Hopefully, we will produce a next generation and raise them in a good way. I guess I won't give my children a lot of pressure, just like my parents never gave me too much pressure. I think it's not fair to children; they need to have their own lives. We just need to provide them with a good environment. But even if I say this now, I might do it differently. Let's just wait and see.'

NOTES BY
Bu Xiangzhi

HD 14.12 – A10
Bu Xiangzhi
Vladimir Fedoseev
Ningbo 2015 (5)

This game was played in the last round of the China-Russian Summit this year. The Chinese men's team was leading by 3 points, 11½-8½. Because we had defeated Russia in the blitz games, we only needed one point out of five to guarantee victory. The last time I played, in Yinzhou in 2010, I got 4/5 from my last five games. I hoped this good luck would last.

1.♘f3 e6 2.c4 f5

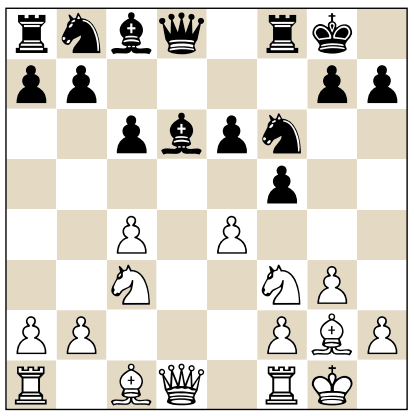


My opponent Fedoseev plays many different openings, but I had barely seen him play the Dutch Defence. This shows he wants to fight, allowing me the chance to go for victory as well.

3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 d5 5.0-0 ♗d6

An alternative set-up is 5...c6 6.d3 ♗e7 7.b3 0-0 8.♗b2.

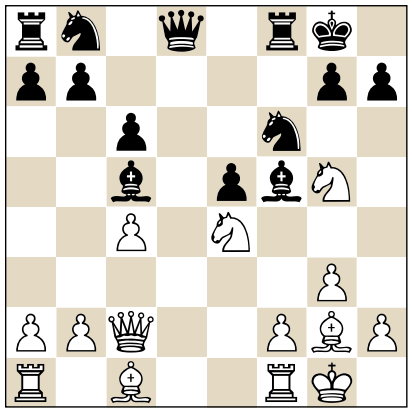
6.♘c3 0-0 7.d3 c6 8.e4 dxe4 9.dxe4



9...e5 Earlier this year, at the U.S. Open, I encountered 9...fxe4, which is not a good move, so I soon had an advantage: 10.♘g5 e5 11.c5! ♗e7 12.♕b3+ ♘d5 13.♗xe4 ♗xg5 14.♗xg5 ♕xg5 15.♘xd5 cxd5 16.♗xd5+ ♔h8 17.♗xb7 ♗xb7 18.♕xb7, and Black had insufficient compensation for the lost material.

I feel that Black should have exchanged queens with 9...♗b4 10.exf5 ♕xd1 11.♖xd1 exf5, when he may be lagging in development a bit, but as yet has no obvious weaknesses.

10.♕c2 fxe4 11.♘g5 ♗c5 12.♘cxe4 ♗f5



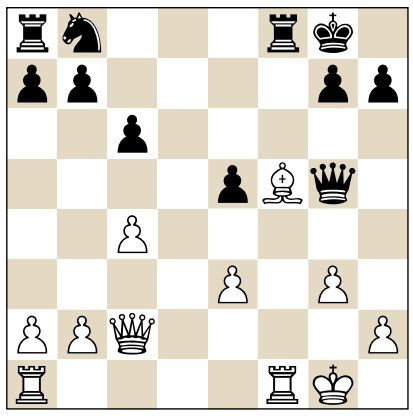
13.♗e3

I spent a lot of time calculating 13.♘e6, but then Black can just play 13...♗xf2+, when White can hardly get any advantage after 14.♖xf2 ♗xe6 15.♘g5 ♕e7 16.♗e3 ♘bd7.

13...♘xe4 A bad idea is 13...♗d4 14.♖ad1 c5 15.♕b3 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♕c7, when after 17.♗xd4 exd4 18.♘xc5 ♕xc5 19.♕xb7 ♘d7 20.♕d5+ ♕xd5 21.♗xd5+ ♔h8 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖xd4 White has excellent winning chances.

After 13...♘bd7, the white bishop on e3 'blocks' the black bishop on c5, so now I can play 14.♘e6 ♗xe6 15.♘xc5 ♘xc5 16.♗xc5.

14.♗xe4 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 ♕xg5 16.♗xf5



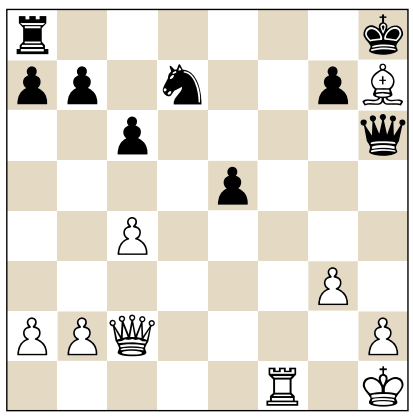
16...♕xe3+ White is also better after 16...♔h8 17.♗xh7 ♕xe3+ 18.♔g2 ♖xf1 19.♖xf1 ♘d7.

17.♔h1 I should have played 17.♔g2 ♔h8 18.♖ae1 ♕g5 19.♕c3, but there were some lines I was worried about, with a black rook entering the d-file and creating counterplay.

17...♔h8 18.♖ae1 ♕h6

Another possibility was 18...♕g5 19.♕e4 ♘a6 20.♕xe5.

19.♗xh7 ♖xf1+ 20.♖xf1 ♘d7



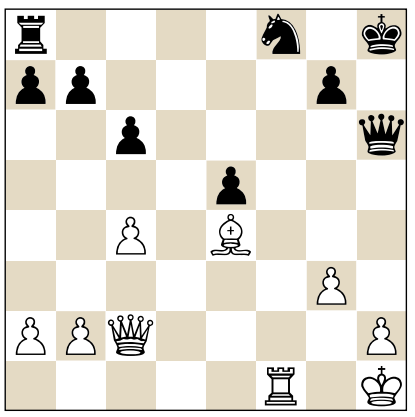
Ningbo 2015 men					
					%
1	Bu Xiangzhi	IGM CHN	2695	4	80
2	Maxim Matlakov	IGM RUS	2691	4	80
3	Wei Yi	IGM CHN	2724	3	80
4	Lu Shanglei	IGM CHN	2595	3	60
5	Peter Svidler	IGM RUS	2740	3	60
6	Yu Yangyi	IGM CHN	2736	2	40
7	Wang Chen	IGM CHN	2521	2	40
8	Nikita Vitiugov	IGM RUS	2734	1½	30
9	Vladimir Fedoseev	IGM RUS	2664	1½	30
10	Daniil Dubov	IGM RUS	2661	1	20

5-round Scheveningen tournament

21.♗g6 After 21.♗f5 Black has 21...♘f6, planning ...♖e8 and ...e4. It is not easy for White to stop this, which is why I went for 21.♗g6, preventing Black's knight and rook from going to comfortable squares.

21...♘f8 After 21...♘f6 White can continue with 22.♕d3 ♕h3 23.♗f5 ♕h6 (23...♘g4? fails to 24.♕e2 ♖f8 25.♔g1, and Black loses material) 24.g4.

22.♗e4



Finally, we have arrived at this position. I am slightly better, but winning is still kind of difficult. I noticed that my opponent was running low on time, so

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FAN LULU

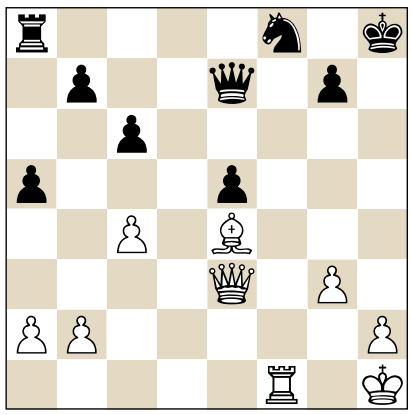
Scoring 4 from 5, former prodigy Bu Xiangzhi demonstrated that at 29 he is still a formidable force.

I sped up my moves a bit, not giving him much time to think.

22...♕e6

Black has many moves here, for instance 22...♖d8 23.♕b3 ♕h3 24.♖f2 ♕d7 25.♔g2, and White is clearly better, altough he will still have to work to win this.

23.♕b3 ♕e7 24.♕e3 a5



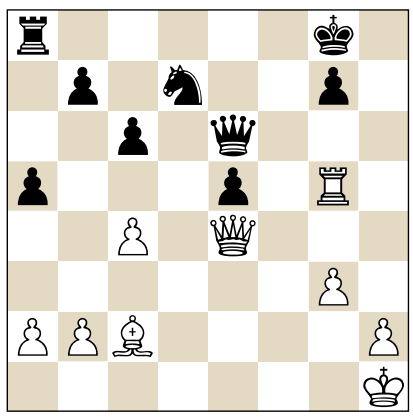
25.♗c2!

A multipurpose move, threatening ♕e4 and ♖f5, and preparing to push c5 at some point, followed by ♗b3, with an attack on the black king.

Another way to play was 25.♖f5 g6 26.♕h6+ ♔g8 27.♖f2, maintaining the pressure on Black's position.

25...♕e6 26.♖f5 I missed the quiet move 26.♖f2, which puts Black in zugzwang and makes it hard for him to defend, for instance 26...♔g8 (losing is 26...♖d8 27.♕e4 ♔g8 28.c5 ♕xa2 29.♕f3, and Black can resign, while 26...♕xc4 27.♕xe5 is also difficult for Black) 27.♕e4 a4 28.♔g1.

26...♘d7 27.♕e4 ♔g8 28.♖g5



28...♕h6?

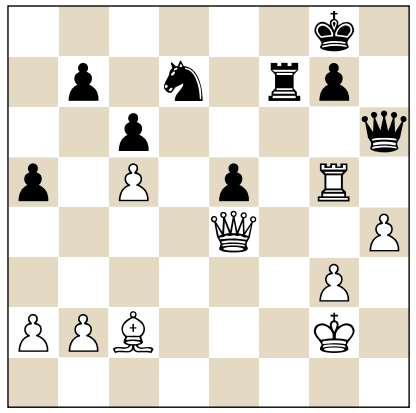
He should have tried 28...♕h3 29.♔g1 ♖f8 30.♕e2 ♕h6 31.h4, when White is obviously calling the shots, but the game is definitely not over yet.

29.h4

After this pawn push I felt I was going to win the game. Black's queen is stuck on h6 to guard the king and I just need to optimize my attacking pieces.

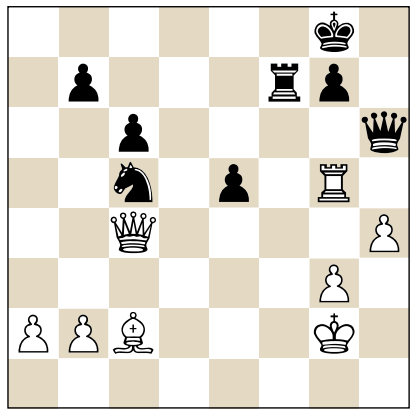
29...♖f8 30.♔g2 ♖f7 31.c5!

As the white bishop joins the attack, Black can no longer hold his position.



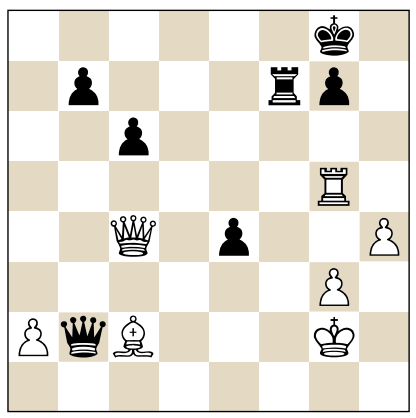
31...a4 Also losing are 31...♘xc5 32.♕xe5 b6 33.♗g6 ♖f8 34.♕e2 b5 35.♕e3 and 31...♔f8 32.♕c4 ♕f6 33.♖f5 ♕e7 34.♗b3.

32.♕xa4 ♘xc5 33.♕c4



33...e4 33...♕d6 won't save the game either: 34.♗g6 ♘e6 35.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 36.♖f5+ ♔e7 37.♕e4.

34.♕xc5 ♕f6 35.♕c4 ♕xb2



After playing this move my opponent had one second left on his clock, and while I was thinking about 36.♖f5 or 36.♕xe4, he resigned.

This point guaranteed our victory against the Russians. Thanks to my individual result my rating went back up to 2700 again. I should say that Yinzhou and Ningbo are my lucky places.

NOTES BY
Shen Yang

SL 10.14 – D94
Natalia Pogonina
Shen Yang
Ningbo 2015 (5)

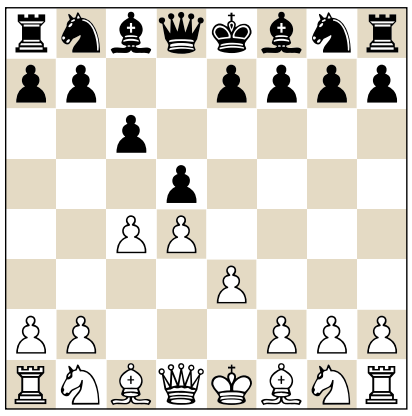
This was the 9th edition of the China-Russia match and the 7th time that I participated. The first time I played was in Moscow in 2004, when I was one of the juniors. This time the drawing of lots determined that our men's team had an extra white game, while our women's team played an extra black game.

Interestingly, the Slav Defence featured in all my five games, making it a Slav theme tournament for me! I remember that back in 2007, everybody played 1.e4; now we all have switched to 1.d4.

I personally felt that in these 10 years, we all had changed from intense to more solid players, looking for our chances in tiny places.

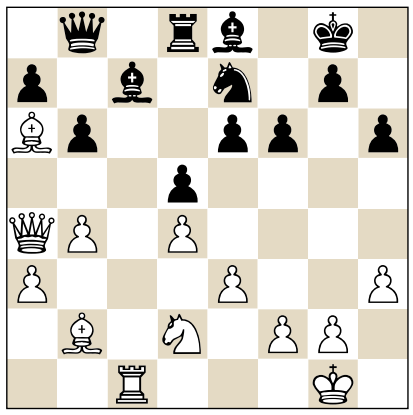
The following game was played in the last round. I played Black against this year's runner-up in the World Championship, Pogonina. Our team was two points ahead, so we had a clear goal: to stop Russia from fighting back.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3



3...♘f6

In the previous round, I had been Black against Russian new star Goryachkina – she also went for this line. There I played 3...♗f5 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.♕b3 ♕c8 6.♘c3 e6 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗d2 ♗d6 9.♖c1 ♘ge7 10.♘a4 0-0 11.♘c5 ♖b8 12.♗b5 ♕c7 13.h3 ♖bc8 14.0-0 b6 15.♘a6 ♕b7 16.♕a4 h6 17.♗c3 ♖fd8 18.b4 ♘b8 19.♘xb8 ♕xb8 20.♗a6 ♖c7 21.a3 ♗e4 22.♘d2 ♗g6 23.♗b2 f6 24.♖xc7 ♗xc7 25.♖c1 ♗e8.

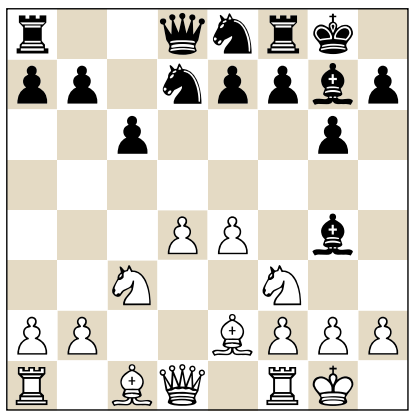


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

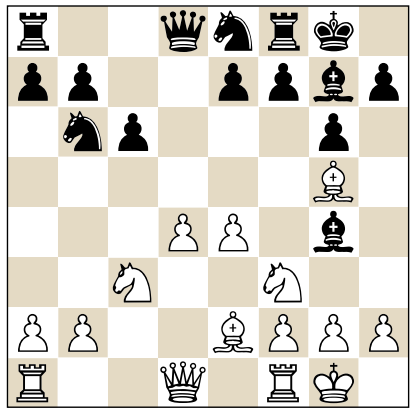
In this almost equal position, White made a big mistake, 26.b5?? (locking out the a6-bishop – after the simple 26.♗b5 or 26.♕c2 the position is still equal) 26...♗h2+ 27.♔h1 ♗d6 28.♕b3 ♖d7 29.♖c3 ♗g6 30.a4 ♖c7 31.♔g1 ♔f7 32.♘f3 ♖xc3 33.♗xc3 ♕c7 34.♘d2 ♗d3 35.♕b2 g5 36.♕b3 h5 37.a5 g4 38.axb6 axb6 39.hxg4 hxg4 40.♗b2 ♗h2+ 41.♔h1 ♗e2, and Black was winning (0-1, 61). This time I decided to vary.

4.♘c3 g6 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗g4 9.♗e2 ♘bd7 10.e4 ♘e8

This is an interesting line, but very few people go for it. Black backs off a little in the centre, opening up the g7-bishop. The knight goes from c7 to e6, putting pressure on White's central pawns.

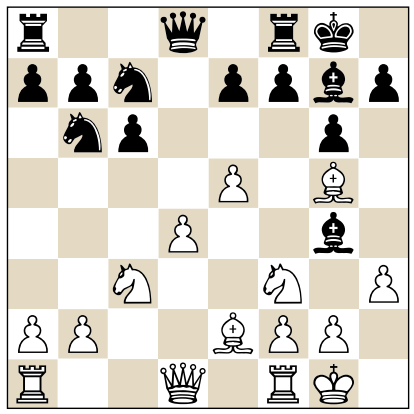


11.♗g5 ♘b6



12.e5 After thinking for a long time Pogonina chose to push her centre pawn forward. In this position Russian GM Tomashevsky once played 12.♕d2 against Romanov in Sochi 2010 (1-0, 42). This move was also played by Zhao Xue against me in Jiangmen 2014 (65, 0-1).

12...♘c7 13.h3



13...♗e6 Because White's central pawns are fixed, I decided not to exchange the knight for my bishop for the moment, intending to put it on a better central square: d5.

14.♕c1 ♗d5 15.♘xd5

White decides to trade the minor pieces. During the game I was more

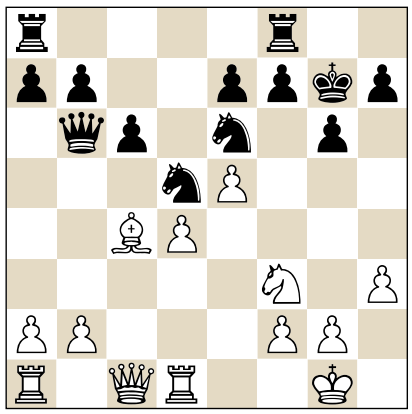
Ningbo 2015 women

						%
1	Shen Yang	IM	CHN	2465	4	80
2	Tan Zhongyi	WGM	CHN	2488	3½	70
3	Lei Tingjie	WGM	CHN	2450	3½	70
4	Alina Kashlinskaya	IM	RUS	2432	2½	50
5	Huang Qian	WGM	CHN	2457	2	40
6	Ding Yixin	WGM	CHN	2439	2	40
7	Valentina Gunina	IGM	RUS	2548	2	40
8	Olga Girya	WGM	RUS	2486	2	40
9	Natalia Pogonina	WGM	RUS	2465	2	40
10	Aleksandra Goryachkina	WGM	RUS	2486	1½	30

5-round Scheveningen tournament

worried that White would keep the pieces on and wait for chances to attack on the kingside: 15.♖d1 ♘e6 16.♗e3, when maybe she could play h4, etc., later.

15...♘bxd5 16.♖d1 ♘e6 17.♗h6 ♕b6 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♗c4



Black's pieces are well placed, and her plan is clear: I will double rooks on the d-file, targeting d4. But here I faced the problem of a very classical choice: which rook to move?

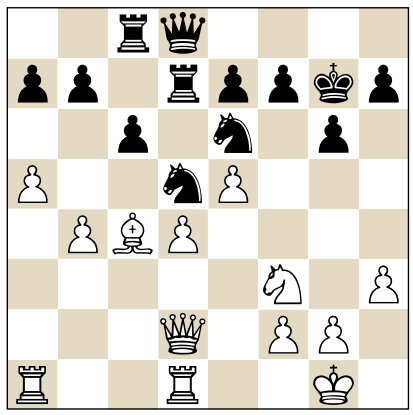
19...♖ad8?

I decided to move the a8-rook to d8, keeping the possibility of ...♖xf6. Or maybe the f-rook could help with the defence on the kingside. But actually it was better to play the f8-rook, which would have proved more efficient later on in the game: 19...♖fd8 20.♕d2 ♖d7 21.a4, and the queen can go back to d8 directly, without wasting a move. But of course 21...a5 can also be considered.

20.♕d2 ♖d7 21.a4 ♖c8

In case of 21...a5 I was worried about 22.♖a3 ♕b4 23.♕c1, when Black's queen is useless on b4.

22.a5 ♕d8 23.b4



Interestingly, White has a lot of space, from the queenside via the centre to the kingside. It looks as if she's controlling the position, but actually the two dark-squared pawns on b4 and d4 can become potential weaknesses. Black's position is more flexible. My pieces are active and I can start counterplay anytime, for example with ...♘dc7 or ...c5 etc.

23...b6 24.♕b2 ♖b8

Also possible was 24...bxa5!? 25.♖xa5 ♖b8 26.♕a3 ♖db7.

FAN LULU

Shen Yang led the Chinese women to victory. 'Interestingly, the Slav Defence featured in all my five games, making it a Slav theme tournament for me!'

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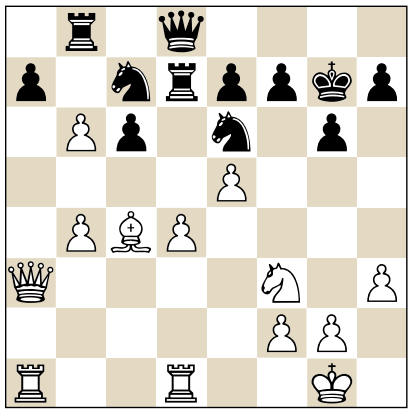
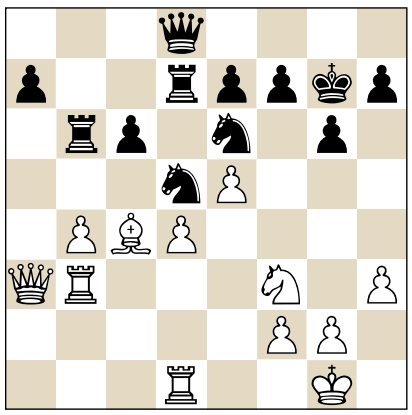
25.♕a3 ♘dc7 26.axb6 Another key moment. How to take back?



26...axb6

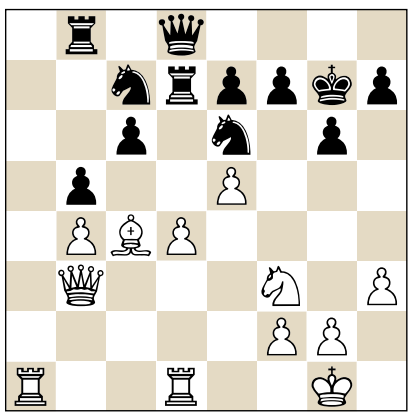
I thought about 26...♖xb6 27.♖ab1 (27.♖ac1 ♘d5; 27.♕xa7 ♖xb4) 27...♘d5 28.♖b3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

but I felt that in that case both sides would have weaknesses, and I couldn't assess the position clearly. I walked around and observed my teammates' positions, and then decided to play solidly, just to make sure the team would win.

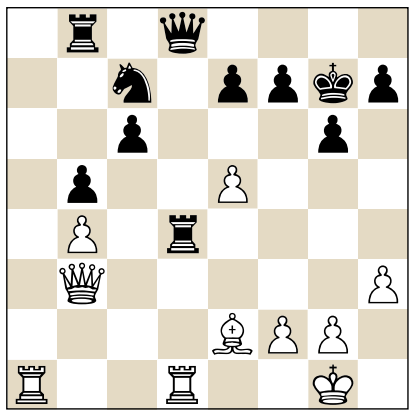
27.♕b3 b5



28.♗e2?!

White is still fighting with all her strength, but a simple way to equalize would have been to exchange the knight with the bishop: 28.♗xe6 ♘xe6 29.♕c3 ♕b6 30.♖ac1, when both sides have one weakness and there is a dynamic balance.

28...♘xd4 29.♘xd4 ♖xd4



30.♗f3?? In time-pressure, White makes a big mistake. She should have played 30.♕c3 ♘e6 31.♕xc6, when Black is slightly better.

30...♘e6

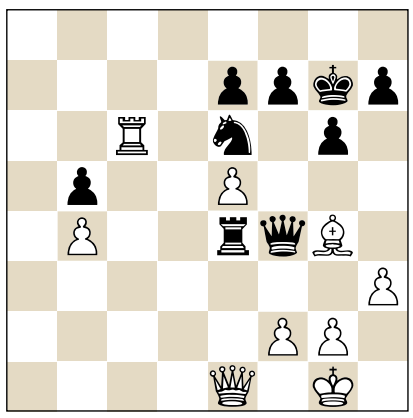
The alternative was 30...♖a8.

31.♕c3 After 31.♗xc6 ♕c7! Black can keep the extra pawn: 32.♗d5 (or 32.♗f3 ♕xe5 33.♖a7 ♖bd8 34.♖xd4 ♖xd4 35.♖xe7 ♕d6 36.♖b7 ♖xb4) 32...♘f4 33.♖xd4 ♘e2+ 34.♔f1 ♘xd4 35.♕b2 ♕xe5 36.♖d1 ♘c6.

31...♕b6 32.♖ac1 ♖bd8 33.♖xd4 ♕xd4

33...♖xd4 would amount to the same thing.

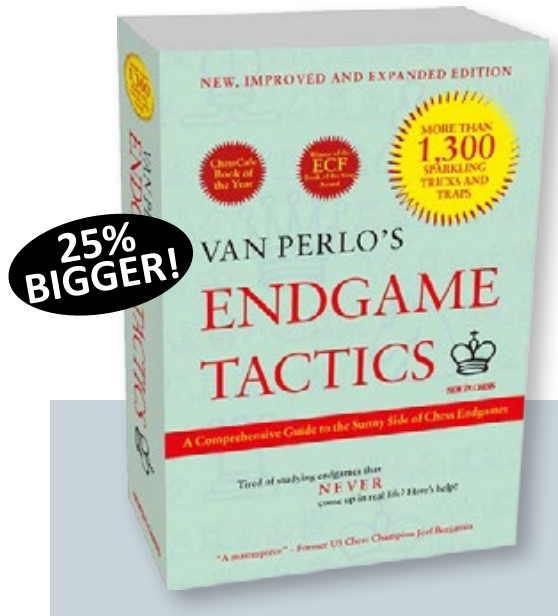
34.♕e1 ♕f4 35.♖xc6 ♖d4 36.♗g4 ♖e4! Black is winning.



37.♕a1 ♘d4 38.g3 ♕xe5 39.♖c1 h5 40.♗d1 ♖e1+ 41.♔h2 ♕e4 42.♗f3 ♖xc1

And White resigned.

In the end we defeated the Russian women 15-10. ■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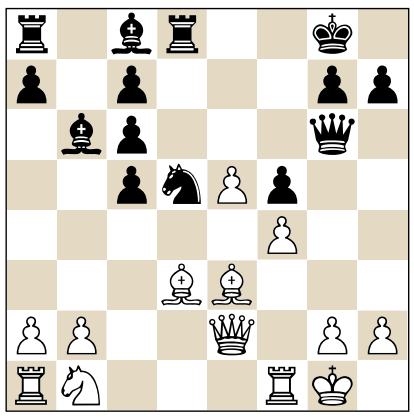
Tripled but not always crippled

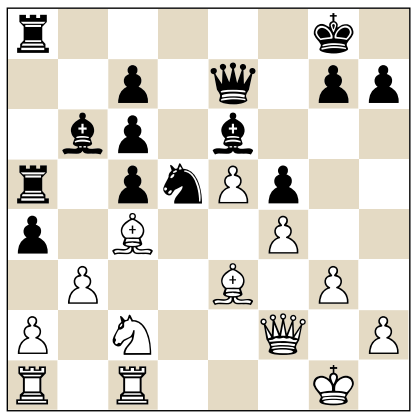
Arthur van de Oudeweetering

Isolated tripled pawns are not the most mobile formation you could think of, yet sometimes their static disadvantage is outbalanced by other, more dynamic factors.



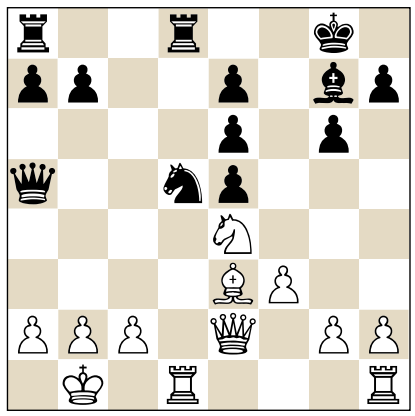
Hortensius-Haast
Amsterdam 2015

Those are ugly tripled pawns, aren't they? Add the buried b6-bishop and White's kingside majority with a protected passed pawn, and you could easily assume Black is in big trouble. One small comfort – one of the tripled pawns may be counted as an extra one (White has just sacrificed with c4-c5). Also, Black does have the concrete threat of ...♘xe3 and ...c5-c4, but White can parry that conveniently by blocking the c-pawns. Quite similar to blocking a single isolated pawn, by the way. **17.♗c4 ♗e6 18.♘a3** 18.♘d2 was to be preferred, as 18...♘xe3 (18...♕f7!? 19.♖ac1? ♘xe3 20.♕xe3 ♖xd2 21.♗xe6 c4 22.♗xf7+ ♔xf7) 19.♕xe3 ♖xd2? (19...♖d4) fails to the intermediate check 20.♗xe6+. **18...♕f7 19.b3?!** Establishing firm control of the blockade square c4. But at the same time this enables Black to mobilize her rooks in a couple of moves. 19.♖ac1 was a better move. **19...a5 20.♕f2 ♕e7 21.♘c2 a4 22.♖fc1 ♖a5 23.g3 ♖da8**



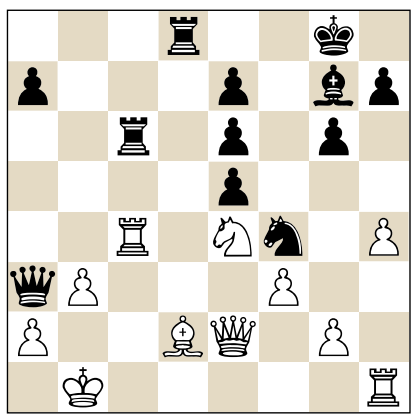
By now you will have noticed that things are not that clear-cut and Black's pieces even seem to be more effective than White's, while the pawns on c6 and c5 provide useful central control. In the end, White lost her way in increasing time-pressure.

Experienced Sicilian players have learned to look beyond the ugly sight of tripled central pawns, which regularly arise in Dragon-like positions.



Bruzon-D.Gurevich
Cali 2001

Again White has sacrificed a pawn to disrupt Black's pawn structure, and now the tripled e-pawn is blocked by a strong knight on e4 while Black's g7-bishop is just as buried as its colleague on b6 in the former example. On the other hand, Black has a strong central knight, while opposite castling also adds to the dynamism of the position. **16...♖ac8 17.♗d2 ♕a4 18.♖c1 b5** Logically, Black continues to safeguard his strong knight on d5. **19.h4 ♖c6 20.b3** More straightforward was 20.h5, although Black has sufficient counterplay, for instance after 20...♘f4!? 21.♕f2 b4. **20...♕a3 21.c4?!** 21.c3. **21...bxc4 22.♖xc4 ♘f4!?**

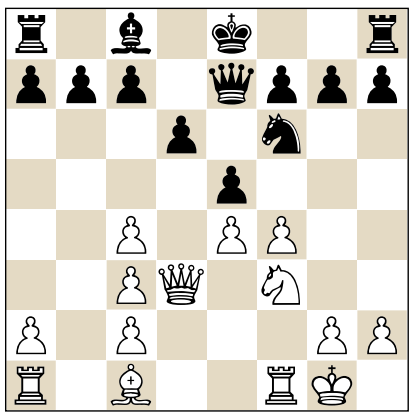


23.♕f1 23.♗xf4 ♖xc4 24.♕xc4 (24.♗c1! is better, when after 24...♖xc1+ 25.♖xc1 ♗h6 26.♖c6 ♔f7 White's exposed king still gives Black sufficient counter-chances) 24...exf4 would obviously improve Black's pawn structure and liberate the g7-bishop at the same time, while 25.♕xe6+? would even be a losing check. **23...♖a6 24.♖c2 ♖b8** And Black's initiative provided enough counterweight to his positional deficits.

It even happened that tripled pawns got some stardom as the 'Irish pawn centre' after grandmasterly praise from the late Tony Miles in a tournament report. Of course, he was – in his typical style – making fun of White's horrid pawn structure. This is the game which started off Miles's little hymn in the first place.

VG 2.16 – C28
Eamon Keogh
Francisco Sanz
Amsterdam 1978

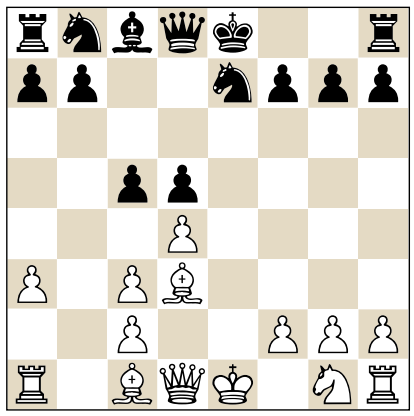
1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗c4 ♘c6 4.d3 ♘a5 5.f4 ♘xc4 6.dxc4 ♗b4 7.♕d3 Years later, after 7.♘f3 Miles successfully sidestepped the battle against the Irish centre with 7...♘xe4 8.fxe5? ♘xc3 9.♕d2 ♘xa2 10.c3 ♘xc1 11.cxb4 ♘b3 0-1, Gallagher-Miles, Chicago 1990. **7...d6 8.♘f3 ♕e7 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3**



An exclamation mark from Miles, who argued 'the isolated tripled pawns give White two extra open files down which to attack'. He did not provide any further moves, but only described the further course of the game. Let us continue for a bit. **10...♘d7** Preventing c4-c5. **11.♗a3 0-0 12.♖ae1 ♖e8 13.♔h1 f6 14.f5 ♕f7 15.g4 b6 16.♖g1 h6 17.h4 ♗a6 18.g5 hxg5 19.hxg5 ♕xc4 20.♕e3 ♔f7** Taking over the h-file. By now Black is winning, but, as Miles painted the battle: 'While Black is struggling to combat the IPC, White launches a full scale assault on the other side of the board and his opponent was fortunate to survive indeed.'

> 'The isolated tripled pawns give White two extra open files down which to attack.'

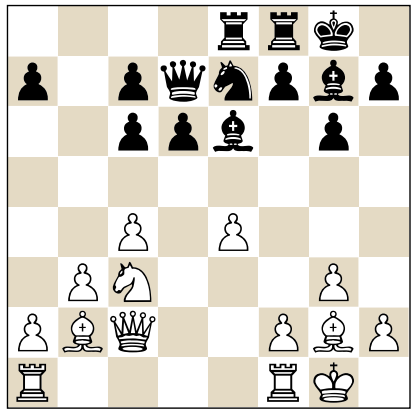
After such mockery you are likely to think twice about allowing tripled pawns in your own games. So how come that a tripled c-pawn is not a laughing matter in the French Winawer?



Popov-Das
Chennai 2015

8.dxc5 This capture has been known for many years as a dangerous weapon, partly because of Smyslov and Spassky. As the former explained it: 'With the pair of bishops, White, naturally, opens up the position. Now his pawns are scattered, but still, he is one up.' **8...♘d7 9.♕g4 0-0 10.♕h4 h6 11.♗e3 ♘f6 12.♕f4 ♘e4 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.♘e2 ♘d5 15.♕g3 ♘xe3 16.♕xe3 ♕e7 17.0-0 ♗d7 18.♖fd1 ♖fe8** 18...♖ac8 19.♘f4. **19.♘f4 ♗a4** 19...♖ac8 20.♖ab1. **20.♖d6** Miles's jocular praise of open files becomes harsh reality. The c5-pawn makes it hard for Black to oppose a possible doubling of rooks on the d-file. Now Black quickly slipped up under the increasing pressure. **20...♖ac8 21.♘d5 ♕g5 22.♕d4 ♗xc2 23.♖d7 ♗b3 24.c4 ♖ed8? 25.h4!** 25.♖xb7 ♗xc4!. **25...♕xh4 26.♖xb7 ♗a4 27.♕e5 ♔f8 28.♕f5 ♗e8 29.♕h7 1-0**

It is time to come back down to earth and put things into some perspective. Despite the above examples, isolated tripled pawns will often be an easy target if active counterplay falls short. One quick and gruesome downfall to keep you on your toes:



Potkin-Gunina
Wijk aan Zee 2015

14.c5 dxc5? As neither 14...d5 15.♖ad1, nor the prospect of two hanging pawns on c6 and d6 will have appealed to Gunina. Yet the text-move amounts to positional suicide, allowing her no room for counterplay to compensate for the pawn structure. **15.♖fd1 ♕c8 16.♘a4 ♗xb2 17.♕xb2 c4** A Pyrrhic victory, this exchange of the foremost tripled pawn. Black's position still ends up in ruins. **18.♘c5 cxb3 19.axb3 ♖d8 20.♕f6 ♖xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖e8 22.♗f1 ♔f8 23.♗a6 ♘g8 24.♕f4 ♕b8 25.♗c4 ♕c8 26.♗xe6 ♖xe6 27.♖d8+ 1-0** ■

Finding Bobby Fischer

A Psychobiographer's Review

Pawn Sacrifice, the long-awaited Bobby Fischer biopic starring Tobey Maguire, will officially be released in the U.S. on September 16. **Joe Ponterotto**, the author of *A Psychobiography of Bobby Fischer*, was one of the film's consultants and had a sneak preview.

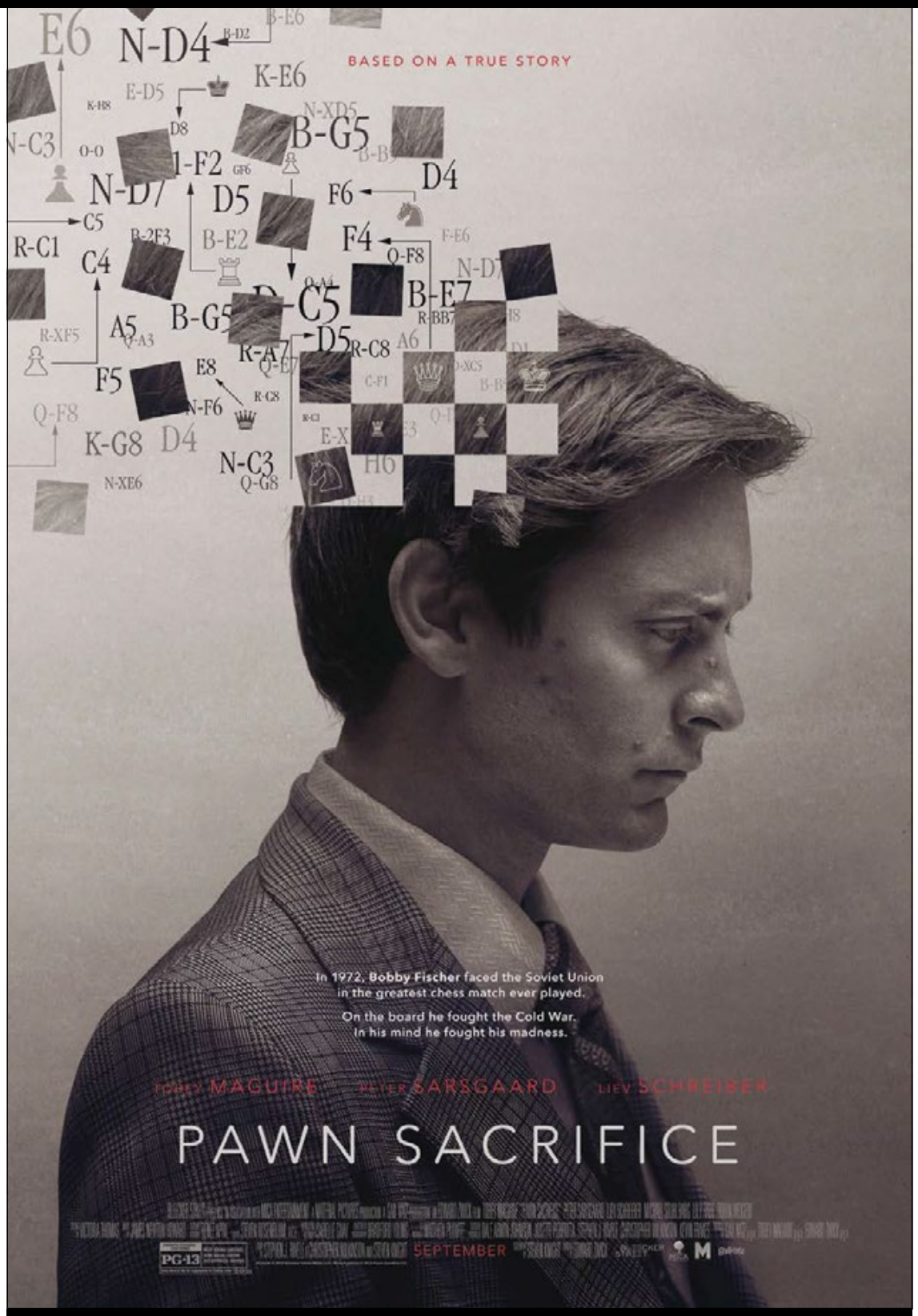
The chess world has long awaited a dramatic, yet accurate film portrayal of the life of Robert (Bobby) James Fischer, the U.S.'s first and only official World Chess Champion. It has arrived. In *Pawn Sacrifice* we witness a riveting drama starring elite actors who took their role preparation very seriously. I know this first-hand as I served as historical consultant on the film. With that, and in the spirit of journalistic integrity, let me begin with full disclosure of my pro bono involvement in the film. I assisted the production team by commenting on the accuracy of the scenes and characters in the screenplay, preparing psychological character profiles of Fischer and his family, and consulting by phone or email during shooting. I was never on set, and never met in person anyone involved in the film.

> 'The viewer comes to both admire his genius at the board and dislike him as a difficult and almost impossible person to engage rationally.'

The first point to emphasize is that *Pawn Sacrifice* is not a documentary. The chess world already has thoughtfully researched and well-crafted Fischer documentaries, including *Anything to Win: The Mad Genius of Bobby Fischer*, the five-part Arts & Entertainment Television series (Biography Channel, 2004), and, more recently, *Bobby Fischer Against the World* (HBO Documentary films, 2011). *Pawn Sacrifice* is a dramatic portrayal of the life and chess of Bobby Fischer leading up to and throughout his match with Boris Spassky in 1972 at the height of Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Understandably, the movie takes some dramatic license in character development and historical accuracy. The lead actors, as well, are accorded the necessary dramatic independence that allows them to identify with key aspects of their characters' personality and present vivid portrayals of the characters as they have come to know them in their study, reflection, and rehearsals. *Pawn Sacrifice* is intended to appeal to a broad audience inclusive of those interested in chess, the Cold War period, and the study of iconic, enigmatic, and controversial personalities. The film is highly successful in reaching this wide spectrum of movie viewers.

Intense preparation

Pawn Sacrifice has unique strengths and presents vivid, quite accurate character portrayals never before captured in previous dramatic films on Bobby Fischer. Here I am speaking to *Bobby Fischer Live* (Amadeus Pictures, 2009), which I found to be a poorly researched and highly biased negative portrayal of Bobby and Regina Fischer; and *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (Mirage Enterprises, 1993), which, as most chess players know, was not about Fischer but about the touching relationship between journalist Fred Waitzkin and his son, Josh Waitzkin, a developing chess prod-


BASED ON A TRUE STORY
In 1972, Bobby Fischer faced the Soviet Union
in the greatest chess match ever played.
On the board he fought the Cold War.
In his mind he fought his madness.
TOBEY MAGUIRE PETER SARSGAARD LIEV SCHREIBER
PAWN SACRIFICE
PG-13
SEPTEMBER

Tobey 'Spider-Man' Maguire portrays Bobby Fischer's inner psychological demons admirably. The star actor prepared intensely for his role.

igy. I see *Pawn Sacrifice* as the first well-researched, superbly acted dramatic film focusing on a heretofore neglected critical component of Fischer's personality – balancing his escalating symptoms of mental illness in the midst of playing the best chess the world had witnessed up to that point in history. Tobey Maguire portrays Fischer's inner psychological demons admirably. And, true to real life events, William Lombardy's (Fischer's second, played by Peter Sarsgaard) and Paul Marshall's (Fischer's attorney, played by Michael Stuhlbarg) essential role in supporting and coaxing Fischer through the match are vividly and accurately portrayed. In fact, some of the most poignant scenes in the film depict the few times when Lombardy and Marshall confront Fischer, rather than appeasing his escalating irrational demands. The sportsmanlike and thoughtful Boris Spassky is subtly but powerfully embodied by Liev Schreiber, who mastered his Russian speaking skills for the role.

Though all the film's lead actors studied and prepared dutifully for their roles, I was especially impressed with Tobey Maguire's intense preparation. After reading extensive amounts of biographical and psychobiographical literature on Fischer, he talked with perhaps the three individuals currently living who knew Bobby Fischer the best: Russell Targ, Joan Fischer's husband who knew Bobby since he was a teenager and throughout his life, including during his 'wilderness' years in the 1980s; Dr. Anthony Saidy (IM), a close friend and 'older brother' figure to Fischer and who was instrumental in actually getting Bobby to Reykjavik for the 1972 match; and Dr. Frank Brady, Fischer's former friend and chief biographer. Throughout filming, the producers arranged for Canadian FM Richard Bérubé to be on set to guide the players and set up the chess positions. Maguire's Fischer is riveting and the viewer comes to both

About the Author

Joseph G. Ponterotto, Ph.D. is a Professor of Counseling Psychology and Coordinator of the Mental Health Counseling Program at Fordham University – Lincoln Center, New York City, USA. He has written a number of academic articles on the life of Bobby Fischer as well as the book A Psychobiography of Bobby Fischer: Understanding the Genius, Mystery, and Psychological Decline of a World Chess Champion *(2012, Charles C Thomas Publisher). He was introduced to 'Pawn Sacrifice' producer Gail Katz through The Science & Entertainment Exchange program of the National Academy of Sciences, whose mission is to connect academic researchers with Hollywood producers to further the dialogue between the science and entertainment communities. He can be reached at Ponterotto@Fordham.edu.*

admire his genius at the board and dislike him as a difficult and almost impossible person to engage rationally, such as was the case with Bobby Fischer in real life, particularly in later years after the match. Finally, the film pointedly captures the epic 'Match of the Century,' when it seemed that the whole world tuned into chess, including U.S. President Richard M. Nixon and then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who are seen watching television updates on the match in the Oval Office.

Shortcomings

At only 114 minutes in length, and with historical or recreated film footage infused, the film doesn't adequately develop the complex personalities of Fischer and his family members. Mr. Maguire focused on Fischer's irrational thought processes and increasing paranoia in the lead up to and during the match, yet the life circumstances and tenuous relationships that led Bobby simultaneously to the apex of chess genius and to the 'edge of madness' (to quote Frank Brady's *Endgame: Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall*, Crown Publishers, 2011) are not adequately developed in the story line. Furthermore, the various layers of Bobby's personality were not portrayed to balance his developing psychological demons, such as his lightheartedness and sense of humor, his at times warm feelings and relationships with Regina and Joan, his impact as a chess author and teacher, and his contribution to the 'professionalization' of chess in the United States.

Another shortcoming of the film is that the essential and critical real life roles of Regina and Joan Fischer are not captured adequately. We do get a sense early on that Regina spent time with her politically aware friends and that Bobby felt neglected; that she cared for Bobby and introduced him to his first chess teacher Carmine Nigro (played well by Conrad Pia), that she cautioned Bobby not to talk to the strange men that followed her (this is an allusion to the FBI surveillance, which actually is documented in the FBI's 994-page dossier on Regina Fischer spanning 30 years, 1942-1972); and that she developed a relationship with another man that may have been Bobby's biological father. However, Regina's force of personality, advocacy for Bobby and U.S. chess players, landmark status as a leading peace activist during the Cold War, and her educational/intellectual accomplishments are not sufficiently represented in the film or its rolling endnotes. Likewise, the magnitude of Joan's impact on Bobby is not captured sufficiently, although the 'coffee shop' scene in which Joan (played by Lily Rabe) confronts attorney Paul Marshall about Bobby's escalating paranoia, delusional thinking, and Anti-Semitism poignantly gives voice to Joan's real-life concern for her younger brother.

An important slice of Fischer

In the book *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (Fred Waitzkin, Random House, 1988), the protagonist literally searches for Bobby Fischer in California during his 'wilderness years', but never finds him. In *Pawn Sacrifice*, Tobey Maguire has found Bobby Fischer; not the whole or complete Fischer, but a slice of Fischer that is important to the archives of chess and the history of significant personalities of the 20th century. ■

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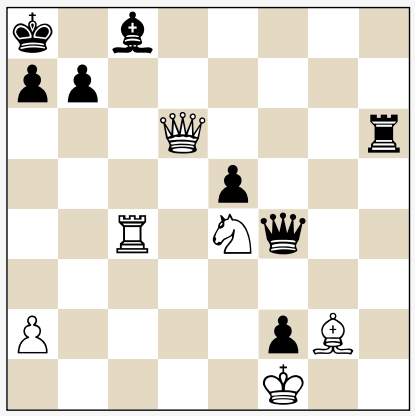
Solutions on page 105



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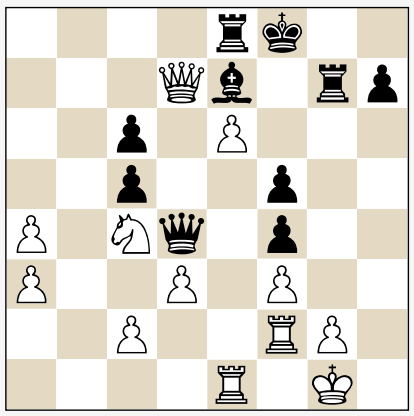
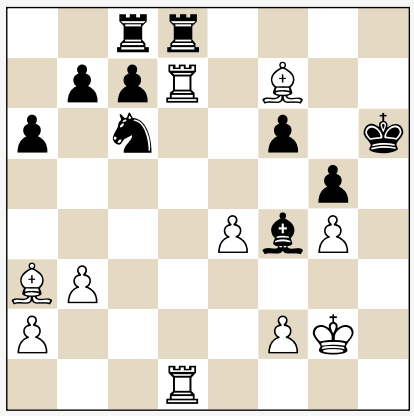
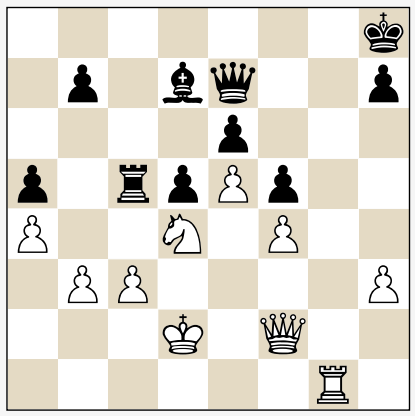


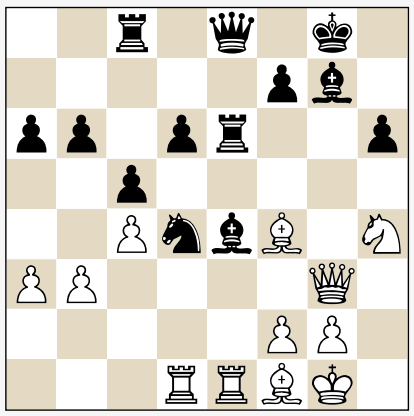
2. Black to move



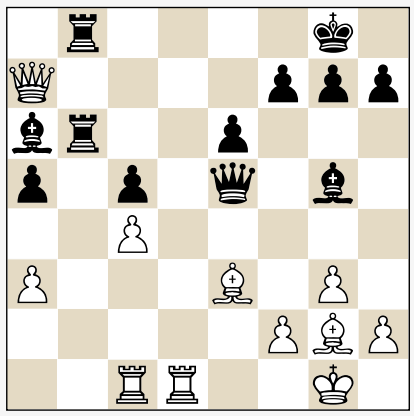
3. White to move



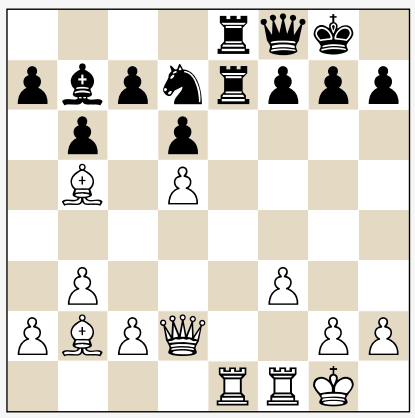
4. White to move



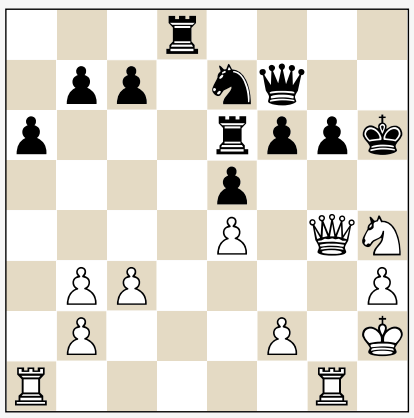
5. White to move



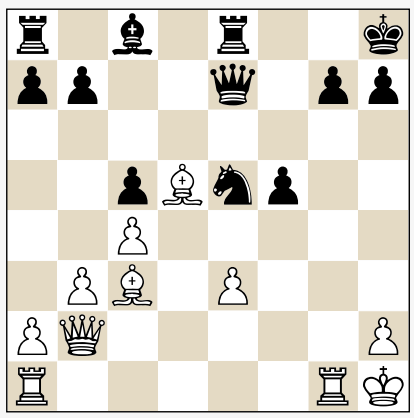
6. White to move



7. White to move



8. White to move



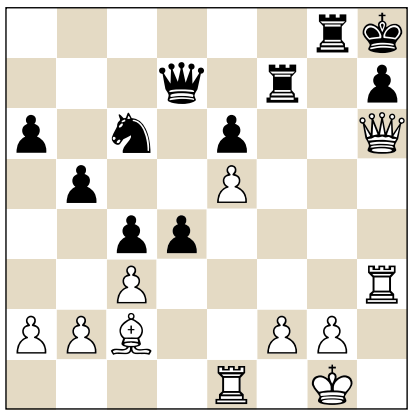
9. White to move

A most generous Greek gift

Sometimes the ultimate fulfilment of a pawn's dream – queening – is less glamorous than it might have hoped for. **ANISH GIRI** looks at a unique theme that happened to feature in two of his recent games.

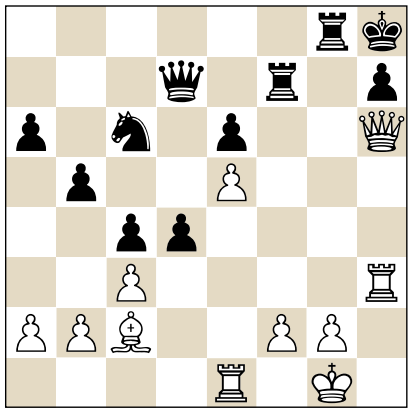
Pawn promotion is definitely one of the most important rules of chess. In a way it is the chessic equivalent of the 'American Dream': the weakest of the pieces has the potential to become a queen. Such promotions often impress the beginner, but passed pawns can also be a pain in the neck at the highest levels. Watching your opponent's pawns rolling all the way down to your side of the board can be an unpleasant and nerve-wracking experience. Therefore, I believe that the ultimate state of satisfaction can be achieved when you can watch your opponent pull that extra queen from the box, while you quietly continue realizing your own plans – unfazed, undisturbed, Zen-like. This story is about some of these rare cases.

The story begins in Round 5 of the recent Dutch Championship in Amsterdam earlier this summer, a tournament that I fortunately managed to win for the 4th time (phew, got some bragging off my chest). In that round I suddenly realized that this was my second consecutive game with the white pieces in which I allowed my opponent's passed pawn to move up the board dangerously far, while still maintaining a decisive advantage. Slightly excited by this notion, I failed to keep my cool entirely and mishandled the position, only to win the game later on. In fact, both these wins were rather sloppy, and in hindsight there was not too much to be proud of. Nevertheless they contained some interesting variations of a spectacular nature.



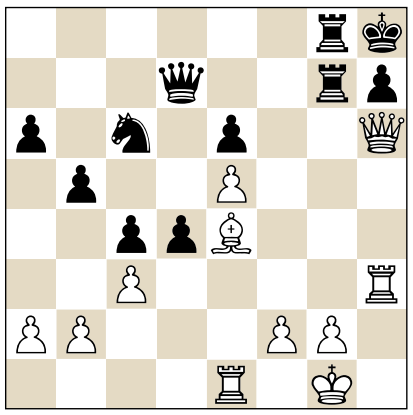
Giri-Pruijssers
Amsterdam 2015 (2)
position after 26...d4

I felt that I had a very pleasant position out of the opening, but it got somewhat out of control surprisingly quickly. At this point I was just going with the flow, hoping that my 'experience' would eventually tell. My opponent's time-trouble increased my optimism as well.



27.♗g6 Here 27.cxd4 ♘xd4 28.♖d1? looked winning, threatening ♖xd4, but there is the strong reply of 28...♕b7!.

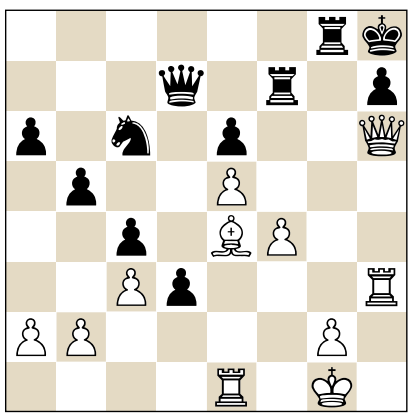
27...♖fg7 28.♗e4 For a second I thought this was winning, as I was threatening ♕f6, but I quickly realized that my bishop manoeuvre wouldn't achieve all that much.



28...♖f7 29.f4!? When I realized that there was no straightforward win, I decided to take some strategic risk and allow my opponent a monster passed pawn. In return, his knight is still completely out of play.

My initial trick was 29.cxd4 ♘xd4 30.♖d1 ♘e2+ 31.♔h2, but I noticed a 'little' flaw: 31...♖xg2+! (after 31...♕xd1?? Black gets mated: 32.♕xh7+! ♖xh7 33.♖xh7 mate).

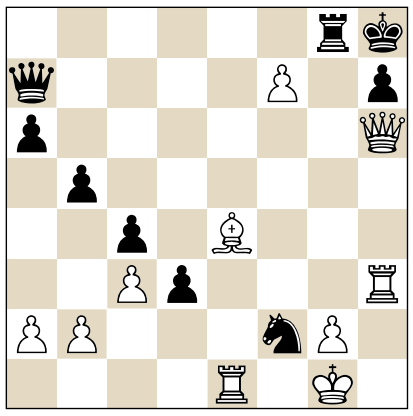
29...d3



30.♔h2

At first I thought the direct approach might win, but to my disappointment it turned out once again that there is no easy solution. In the end I decided to maintain the tension.

After 30.f5 ♘xe5 31.fxe6 ♕a7+ 32.♔h1 ♘g4 33.exf7 at first I thought the queen would have to be recaptured, but then I realized that things were not so simple: 33...♘f2+! 34.♔h2 ♘g4+ 35.♔h1 ♘f2+ 36.♔g1.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

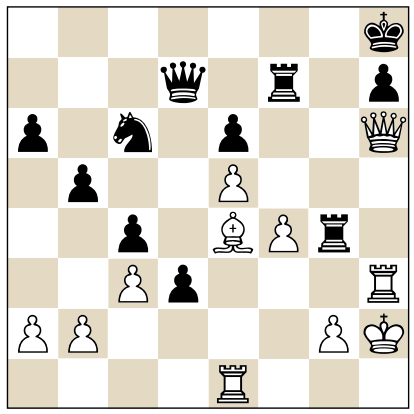
This winning attempt grabbed my attention for a while, but the refutation is trivial: 36...♘xh3+ 37.♔h2 ♕c7+! – ouch.

After 30.♔h1 Black has 30...♖g4!.

30...♖g4

The move I had feared. Now, once again, f5 fails to work.

Another way to defend was 30...♖gg7!? 31.♗g6 ♕d5 32.♖g3 ♖c7.



31.♖h5!

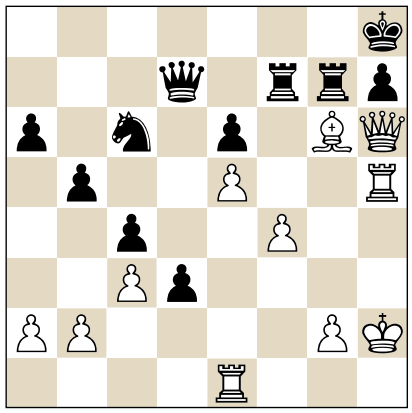
I had a lot of time, as I had played rather superficially in the opening, and now that the position had become so tense and complicated, the extra time came in handy. This move is somewhat abstract, but after a deep

think I had realized that the threat of ...♖xf4 was an illusion, and that the real threat was ...d2, ♖d1 ♘xe5!.
31.f5 is solidly met by 31...♕c7! 32.fxe6 ♕xe5+ 33.g3 ♖xe4 34.exf7 ♖e2+ 35.♖xe2 ♕xe2+, with a forced draw, something I was trying to avoid.

31...♖gg7

This indirectly compliments me on my previous move. Always nice.
31...♖gxf4 loses an exchange: 32.♗g6! ♖f2 33.♗xf7 ♖xf7, and now 34.a4!? softens up the queenside, with a dangerous initiative.
31...♘d8!? is the passive way to try and keep the balance.

32.♗g6!

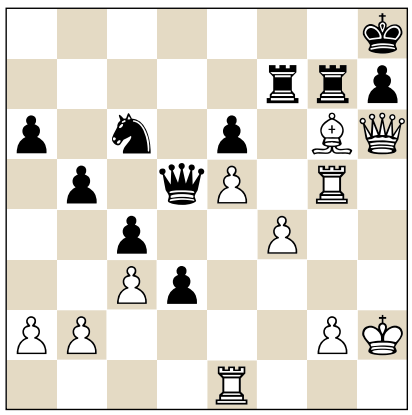


32...♕d5

Protecting the rook by hinting at the weakness of the g2-pawn.
32...d2!? 33.♖d1 ♕d5 avoids the trick in the game, but the pawn on d2 feels very loose and is likely to drop in the long run. This is why my opponent instinctively kept the pawn on d3, where it is protected. White defends the bishop with 34.♖g5.
Bad is 32...♖e7?, when 33.♗xh7! wins on the spot: 33...♖xh7 34.♕f8 mate.

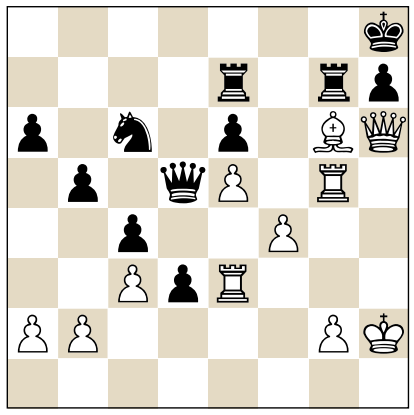
33.♖g5

Renewing the threat.



33...♖e7 There are some other squares too, but it's hard to tell which one is best. Now we reach the main topic of the conversation. Bad was 33...♖xf4? 34.♗e4 ♕d7 35.♗xc6.

34.♖e3!!

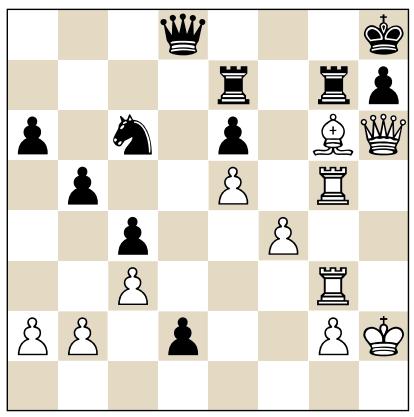


It felt great to ignore the pawn and pull together my last resources.

34...d2 35.♖eg3! ♕d8

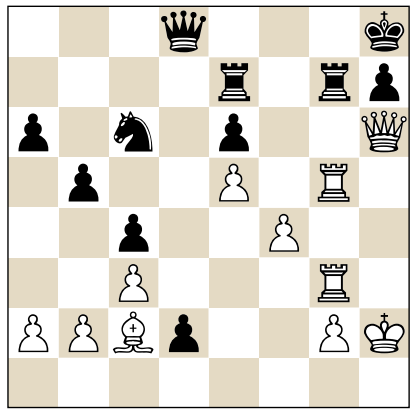
> 'It is generally advisable to play forced wins when they are available.'

My opponent watched his clock tick down and to his disbelief realized that he had no choice but to drop the queen back, as queening the pawn is punished by ♗xh7. Here I must admit that I played on autopilot.



36.♗c2?

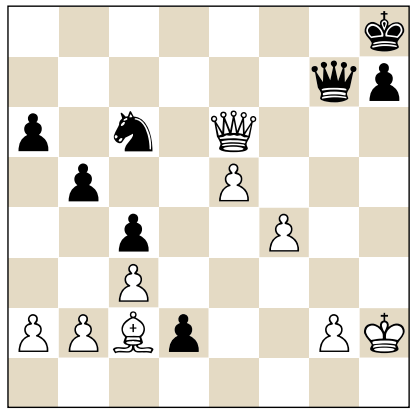
It sort of felt right to keep the h7- and d2-pawns both under control, but as the cliché goes, chess is a concrete game.
36.♗h5 was a better move.
But the real deal was 36.♗e8!!. Now you can take your time and see for yourself that the only move is 36...♕c7, when the win is still not easy, but after 37.♕f6! ♔g8 38.♗h5! it is not hard to see that Black loses.



36...♕f8?

Played out of desperation.
36...♖xg5 37.♖xg5 looks very lost, but it turns out that there is 37...♖f7!!. This is why it was wiser to keep the bishop on h5. After 38.♕h5!? White is still pressing, but it is generally advisable to play forced wins when they are available.

37.♖xg7 ♖xg7 38.♖xg7 ♕xg7 39.♕xe6



Now I have an extra pawn and d2 is falling as well. The rest is easy.

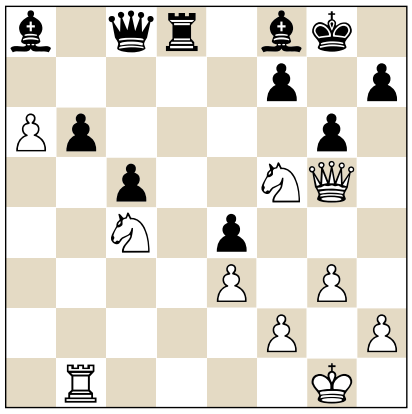
39...♘e7 40.♕d6 h5 41.♕xd2 ♕g4 42.f5 ♘d5 43.f6

Black resigned.

ALINA L'AMI

Less than a week after he won the Dutch Championship for the fourth time, Anish Giri and Sopiko Guramishvili married in Mtskheta, a village 20 kilometres from the Georgian capital Tbilisi.

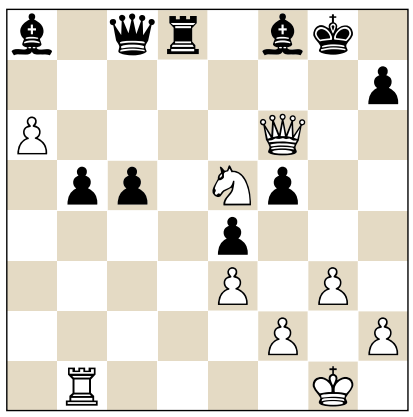
And then, two days later, I was involved in the following adventure.



Giri-Bok
Amsterdam 2015 (4)
position after 31.♕g5

The fun had started much earlier, but the editor asked me to limit myself to the topic of this article. Here, after a lot of ups and downs, I didn't know what to think, but I thought that a logical conclusion to the game would be a draw. Having said that, my opponent, the talented Dutch grandmaster Benjamin Bok, did appear somewhat nervous.

31...f6? Very impractical.
31...b5 32.♘e5 f6 33.♕xf6 gxf5 looked like a draw to me, but it turns out that White can still play on:

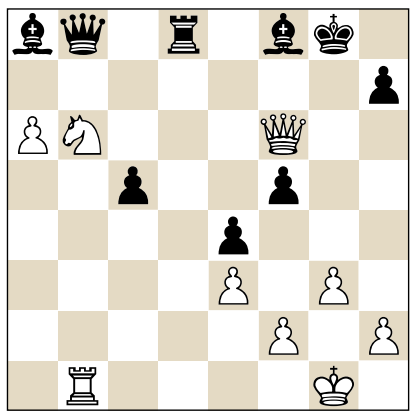


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

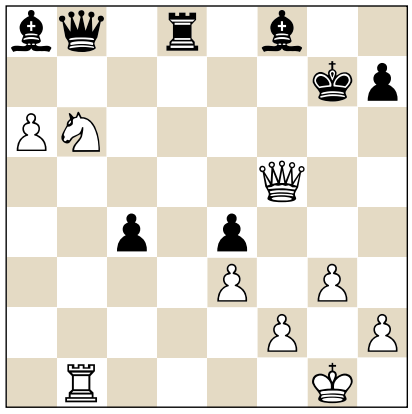
34.♖xb5!? ♕c7 35.♕e6+ ♔g7 36.♕xf5, with a rather unpleasant initiative. The difference in king safety is immense.

31...♕c7!? keeps the tension, when a good reply would be 32.♔g2! ♖d5 33.g4!.

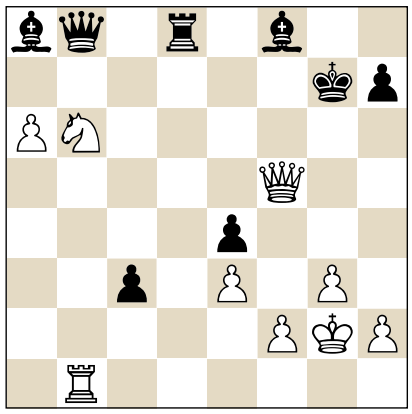
32.♕xf6 gxf5 33.♘xb6 ♕b8
This position looked quite bad for Black, and to add some pressure, I decided to give an unpleasant check first.



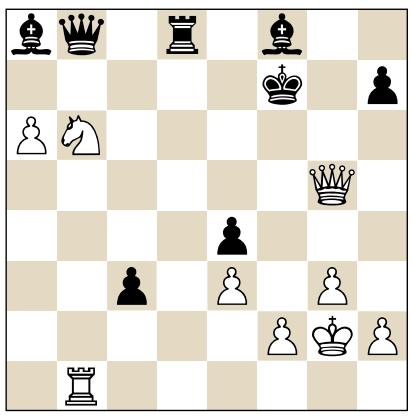
34.♕e6+! ♔g7 35.♕xf5 c4
Quite desperate, but in fact with no time on the clock the easiest thing to do is push your passed pawn.



36.♔g2!? I must say that here I felt that the game would be over soon. I know, I know. Childish.
36.a7 ♕c7 37.♕g5+ ♔h8 38.♘xc4! wins the passed pawn, though what I did is good, too.
36...c3 Calvin the c-pawn keeps on going. 36...♗e7! is the machine's suggestion. Can't blame my opponent, even now I don't really see the point.



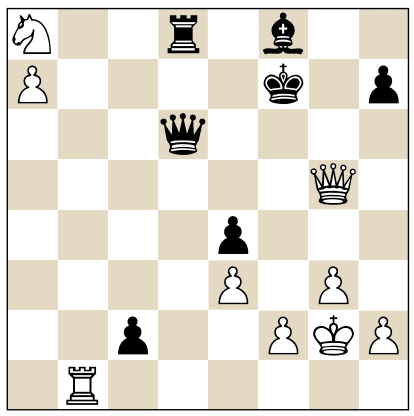
37.♕g5+ 37.♘xa8!! would have been a brilliant win, but the text doesn't spoil anything yet. After 37...♕xb1 38.♘c7 it turns out that the queen and the knight are a duo worth more than a full extra queen. Romantic. 38...c2 39.♘e6+ ♔g8 40.♘xd8 c1♕ 41.♕f7+. Yummy!
37...♔f7 37...♔h8 38.♘xa8 ♕xb1 39.♕xd8, and wins.



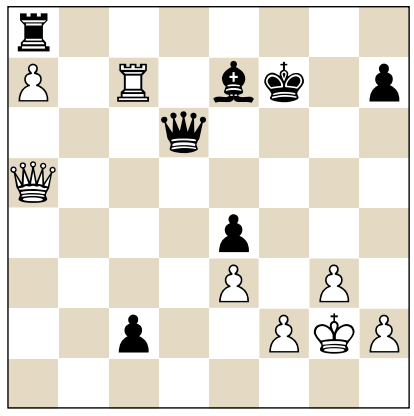
38.a7?? I saw some cheap fork and decided it would be the easiest. My original intention was actually simply mating, which could be done by 38.♖b5!, and Black really can't stop ♖f5+, with an easy mate to follow.
38...♕d6
I had obviously seen this move, but I missed some details later on.

'After 37...♕xb1 38.♘c7 it turns out that the queen and the knight are a duo worth more than a full extra queen. Romantic.'

38...♕c7 39.♘xa8 ♖xa8 40.♕d5+ was kind of my point.
39.♘xa8 c2

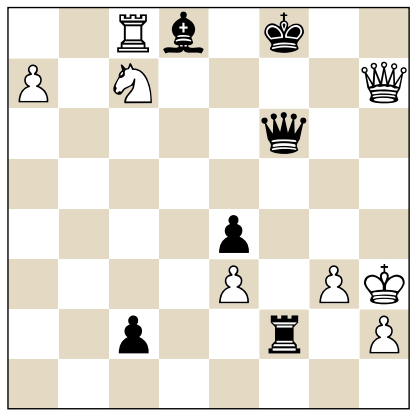


40.♕f5+?
Since intuitively I wanted to make another move, I could have started a big monologue on trusting your intuition, but at the end of the day, you do have to try to calculate sometimes, and then you are supposed to follow your conclusions. Needless to say, they were wrong this time. After 40.♖b7+ ♗e7 I was planning to go ♕f5+, missing ...♕f6, and once I saw it I gave up on 40.♖b7. The win was no longer easy.
But: 41.♖c7! ♖xa8 42.♕a5!!



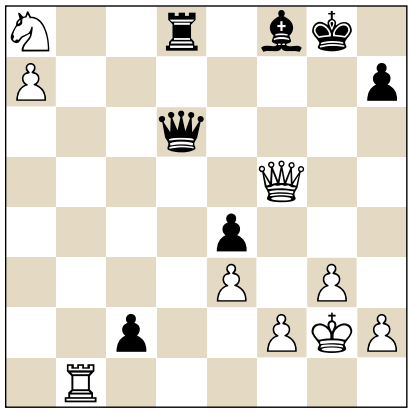
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And surprisingly, my passed pawn is immune, while my opponent's is going to be picked up. Such things are easy to explain, but hard to see. I was thinking more in the direction of 41.♕f5+ ♕f6! (41...♔g8 42.♖c7!) 42.♕xh7+ ♔f8 43.♖c7 ♖d2!. This looked totally unclear. Analysis confirms this conclusion: 44.♔h3 ♖xf2 45.♖c8+ ♗d8 46.♘c7

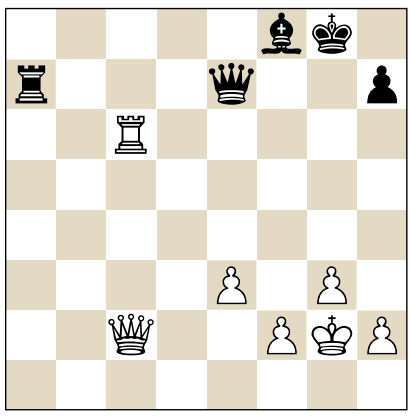


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

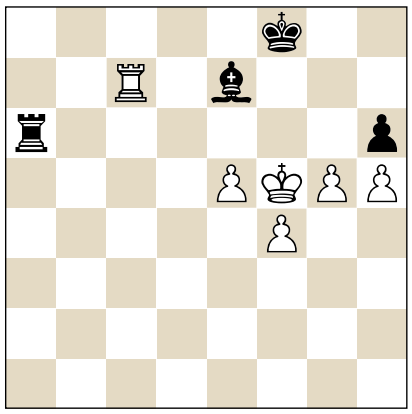
46...♖xh2+! (46...c1♕ loses after a truly brilliant sequence: 47.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 48.♘e6+ ♔e8 49.♕g8+ ♔e7 50.♕xd8+ ♔xe6 51.♕b6+ ♔f7 52.a8♕ ♕f1+ 53.♔g4 ♕d1+ 54.♔g5, and White wins) 47.♔xh2 ♕f2+ 48.♔h3 ♕f1+ 49.♔g4 ♕f3+, with a funny perp.
40...♔g8 Now I had enough time to realize that by trying to inverse the move order, I had actually spoilt it.
40...♕f6 41.♕xh7+ was my point.



41.♖a1 Basically accepting the fact that the win is no longer there. In the subsequent phase, I kept the pressure on, but it is only thanks to a large amount of luck that I managed to win this game. 41.♖b7 is now met by 41...♕g6!.
41...♖xa8 42.♕xe4 c1♕ 43.♖xc1 ♖xa7 44.♖c6 ♕e7 45.♕c2



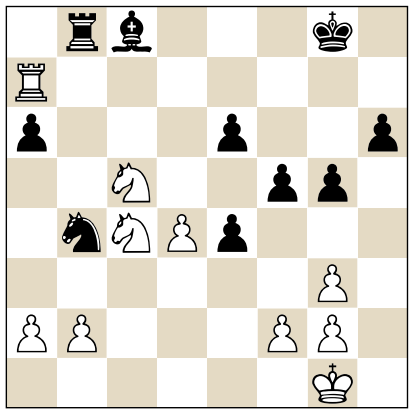
45...♕f7 46.♖c4 ♖a6 47.e4 ♖a3 48.♕e2 ♖a6 49.h4 ♖e6 50.e5 ♕b7+ 51.♔h2 ♕d5 52.♕g4+ ♖g6 53.♕f4 ♕f7 54.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 55.f4 ♖e6 56.h5 ♗e7 57.♖c7 h6 58.♔h3 ♖a6 59.♔g4 ♖b6 60.♔f5 ♖a6 61.g4 ♔f8 62.g5



62...hxg5 63.fxg5 ♗d8 64.♖c8 ♔e7 65.h6 ♖a1 66.h7 ♖h1 67.♔g6 Black resigned.

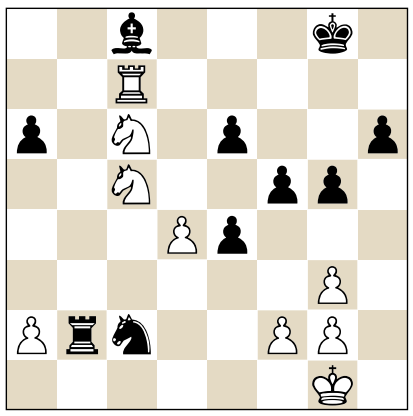
■ ■ ■

A few weeks after the Dutch Championship, when I opened a newly arrived book at a random page, I stumbled upon the following fragment.

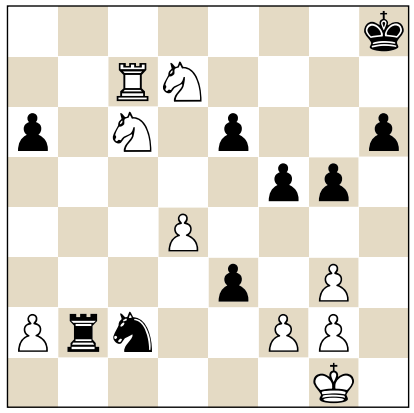


Gelfand-Anand
Moscow 2012 (7)
position after 30...♘b4

Boris Gelfand's win in his World Championship match against Vishy Anand in Moscow in 2012 (which he eventually lost on tiebreak) is a masterpiece in itself. However, what caught my attention this time was the final phase.
31.♘e5
31.♘d6! ♘d5 32.b3 is a more trivial way to win.
31...♘c2!?
Going for some fishy tricks.
32.♘c6 ♖xb2 33.♖c7

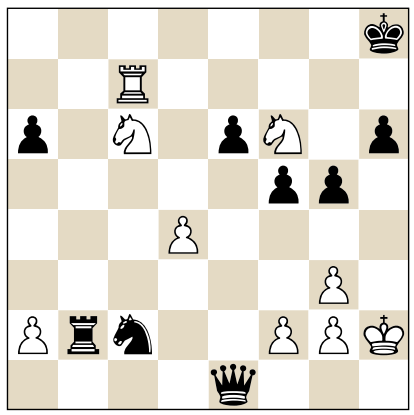


33...♖b1+
Here 33...e3!? would have forced Boris to come up with an even more beautiful solution. As he confessed, he didn't manage to find it so easily. Indeed, the e3-pawn kind of gets on your nerves.
But it shouldn't: 34.♖xc8+ ♔h7 35.♖c7+ ♔h8 36.♘d7! (36.fxe3 ♘xe3)



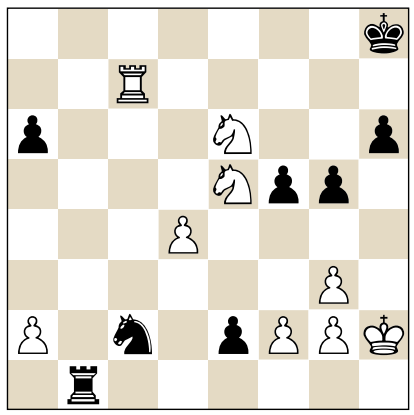
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

36...e2 (36...exf2+ 37.♔xf2 ♘xd4+ 38.♔g1 ♘xc6 39.♘f6! – a beautiful formation!) 37.♘f6 e1♕+ 38.♔h2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and despite having just queened, the upgraded e2-pawn can do nothing to stop the deadly threat of mate.
34.♔h2 e3 35.♖xc8+ ♔h7 36.♖c7+ ♔h8 37.♘e5 e2 38.♘xe6!

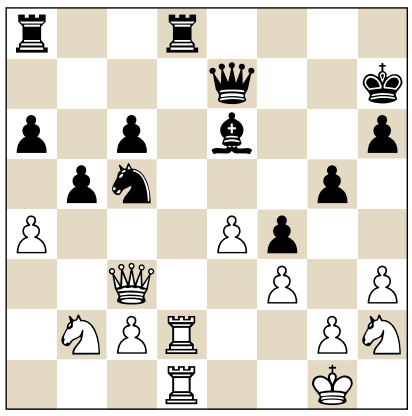


Black resigned. Mate is inevitable.

■ ■ ■

And although, since I was sitting on an empty floor of a new apartment (my second bragging moment!), having just returned from my hon-

eymoon (third!), you might have expected that the connection between the neurons in my brain would be pretty slow, I suddenly recalled (fourth!) another famous game in which the same motif featured prominently.



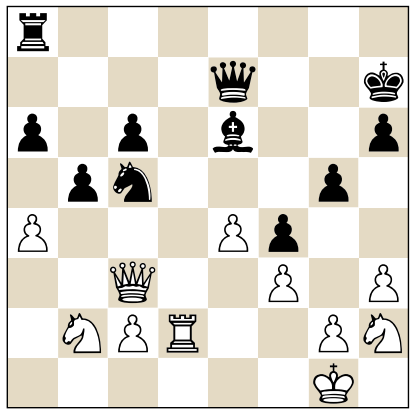
Smeets-Dardha
Netherlands 2015 (6)
position after 27.♖ad1

Jan Smeets is a brilliant player, but lately he has been somewhat out of the chess scene, pursuing a professional career elsewhere. With the tough rules of the chess world – when you don't put your hours of work in, the game doesn't forgive you – here we see Jan struggling against a much lower rated player. Nonetheless, the genius inside him comes back before you know it.

27...♖xd2

27...♘xa4 could lead to a draw in the following way: 28.♘xa4 bxa4 29.♕xc6 a3 30.♖xd8 ♖xd8 31.♖xd8 ♕xd8 32.♕xe6 ♕d4+! (important) 33.♔h1 ♕d1+ 34.♘f1 ♕xf1+ 35.♔h2 ♕e1 36.♕e7+ ♔g6 37.♕xa3 ♕g3+ 38.♔g1 ♕e1+, with a perpetual.

28.♖xd2

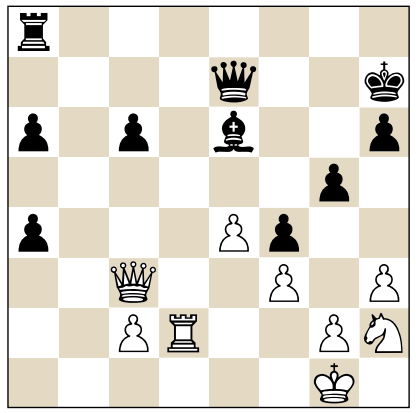


28...♘xa4

Here 28...h5!! would have been a high-class move, but let's not judge the Black player representing the club of Charlois Europoort too harshly. After all he has already been really treating us to some great chess. Note, though, how both white knights would completely lack any stable outposts.

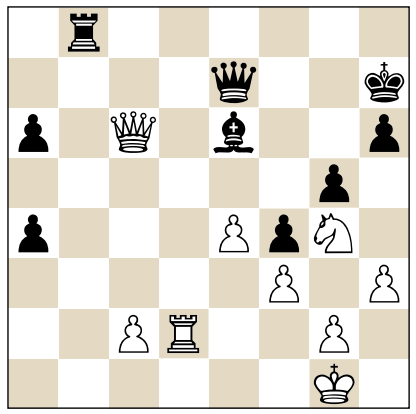
29.♘xa4 bxa4

The passed pawn is quite impressive, but as we already know, there is more to chess than passed pawns!



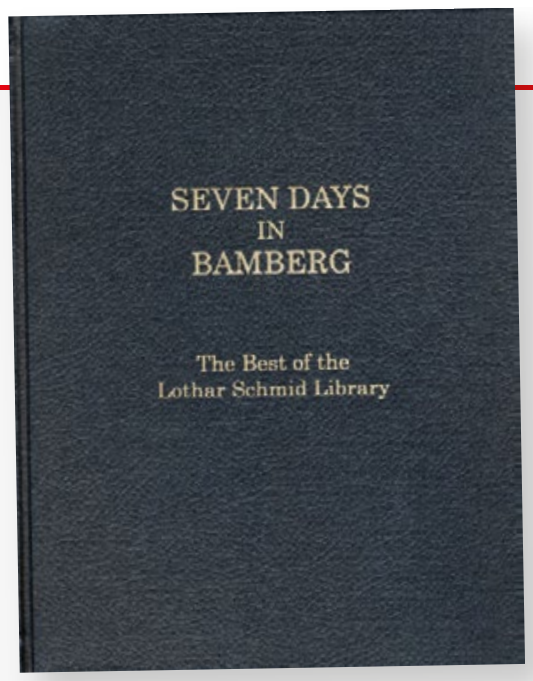
30.♕xc6 ♖b8 31.♘g4!

The knight is joining the attack and, more importantly, the king gets a safe spot on h2.



31...a3

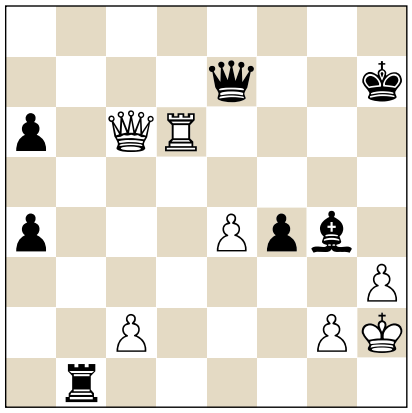
31...♖b1+ leads to a long complicated sequence: 32.♔h2 h5 33.♘e5 g4 34.fxg4 hxg4 35.♘xg4 ♗xg4 36.♖d6!



A private view of the biggest chess library in the world

In November 2014, American collector David DeLucia visited the house of the late Lothar Schmid in Bamberg and inspected Schmid's astonishing chess book collection. This visit has led to the publication of this magnificent hardcover deluxe limited edition. For almost anybody, this will be a first opportunity to see the highlights of Schmid's collection, as the German was always quite secretive and never published a catalogue or any other publication on his library.

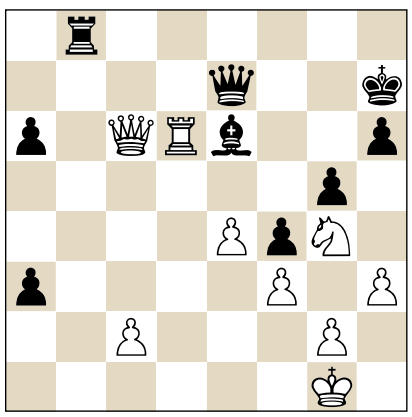
DeLuxe hardcover edition • 246 pages • 265 photos • €475 • www.newinchess.com • limited edition



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

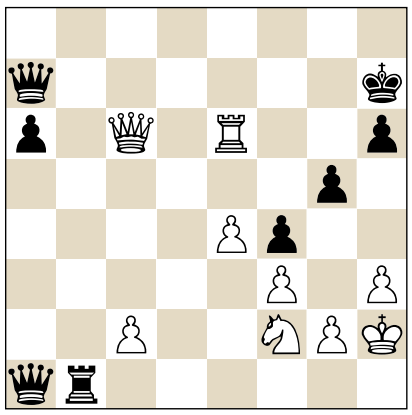
36...♗e6! (an unearthly sequence here!) 37.♖xe6 ♕g7! 38.g4! fxg3+ 39.♔g2 ♖d1 40.e5! ♖d2+ 41.♔g1, and a draw is likely, as it always is after a brilliant sequence.

32.♖d6!



32...a2? Just as in my game against Bok, the defender is likely to keep pushing his pride, even when this is wrong.

Instead, 32...♕a7+ 33.♔h2 ♖b1 had to be included, forcing the knight to come back: 34.♘f2 a2 35.♖xe6 a1♕, and White has nothing better than a draw:

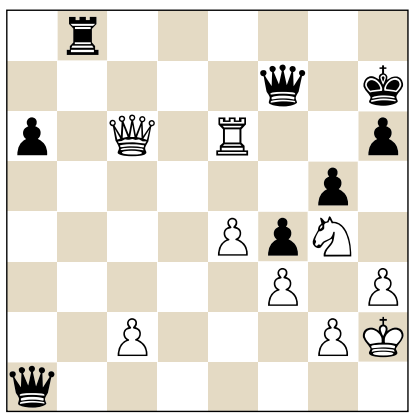


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

36.♖xh6+ ♔g7 37.♕g6+ ♔f8 38.♕f5+ ♕f7 39.♕c5+ ♕e7 40.♕f5+.

> 'The passed pawn is quite impressive, but as we already know, there is more to chess than passed pawns!'

33.♖xe6 a1♕+ 34.♔h2 ♕f7

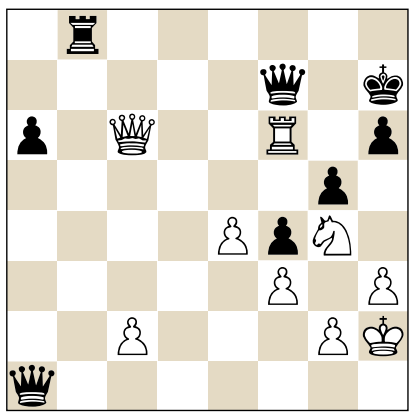


Now Black is a queen up for just a knight and the genius inside Smeets wakes up.

35.♖f6!!

Forcing the queen out of the nice square on f7 and only then taking on h6. Suddenly it appears that Black is in trouble.

On the other hand, 35.♖xh6+ ♔g7 leads nowhere, as the squares around Black's king are protected by the two queens. Yeah, those can be quite useful at times.

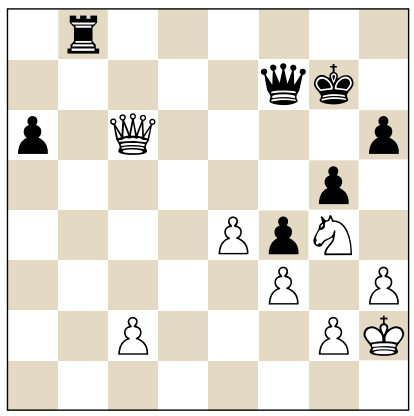


35...♕axf6

Keeping both queens was impossible. After 35...♕e7 36.♖xh6+ ♔g8 there is 37.e5!, with a killing attack.

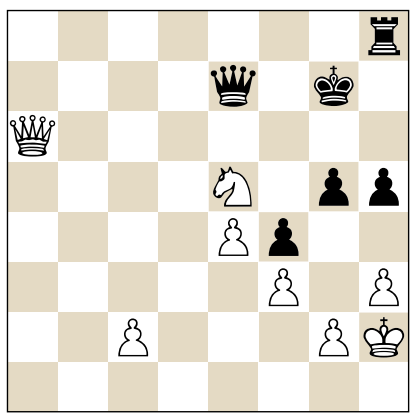
36.♘xf6+ ♔g7 37.♘g4

Now White is just an exchange down, but he is about to pick up a second pawn in compensation.



37...♖h8 38.♕xa6 h5 39.♘e5 ♕e7?

This loses outright, but the position was already far too unpleasant.



40.♕g6+ ♔f8 41.♕f5+ ♔g7 42.♘g6! ♕d8 43.♘xh8 ♔xh8 44.h4 Black resigned.

With these examples I hope I have managed to present the reader with a full picture of modern classic examples of this enticing motif – the come-down of an eager pawn to a dejected queen – while at the same time getting some very casual bragging in as well. Now it is time for me to continue preparing for my upcoming tournaments and for the reader to turn over the next page of the magazine and go to the next article. Well, surely, unless it's Nigel there, it can't get any worse!? ■

DR. SHORT, I PRESUME?

Others will differ in their views – beauty being in the eye of the beholder – but, for me, Cape Town and its environs, where my family enjoyed a most memorable holiday over the New Year, is one of the most magnificent destinations in the world. Table Mountain, with its abundant and extraordinarily diverse flora, provides a majestic backdrop to the vibrant, metropolitan heart and scenic waterfront, teeming with shops, restaurants and cafés. The nearby vineyards of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, some dating back to the late 1600s, are as picturesque as any you will find. And lovers of wildlife also have plenty to appreciate, whether it be observing African penguins at Boulders Bay, whale-watching at Hermanus, or cage-diving with graceful, but terrifying, Great Whites around Gansbaai.

With such overwhelmingly positive memories, I was delighted to receive an invitation to return to Cape Town for the South African Open in July. Alas, prosaic details, like the irksome paternal obligation to occasionally provide for my offspring lest they die of starvation, meant that I did not accept immediately. Enticing as the prospect was, the tournament didn't have a lavish budget, which made travelling to the distant end of a long continent economically questionable. However, after discussing the matter with Graham Jurgensen, the Executive Director of the Kasparov Chess Foundation Africa, over a scrumptious breakfast at the Kingside Diner in St. Louis, Missouri, we agreed on an enterprising plan to combine it with various other promotional and coaching activities throughout the vast region. Put together, it made a worthwhile package.

The first port of call was Accra, in West Africa. Ghana is justly famous for being the first sub-Saharan country to throw off the shackles of colonialism, in 1957. Unfortunately, this admirable, feisty, spirit of independence now extends to requiring visitors to obtain entry visas. Do governments have any concept of, or even care about, how much money they forego by erecting such unnecessary barriers to tourism and commerce? I very much doubt it...

I was collected at the airport by the affable federation board member, Ambrose Amexo, and escorted to the luxurious African Regent Hotel, where I gratefully retired for the evening. My jam-packed itinerary over the following two days consisted, in some order, of a 20-board simul, a lecture on endgames, meeting the Director General of the National Sports Authority, the British High Commissioner, Ghana Chess executives, and attending the opening ceremony of the 5th President's Cup, where, on behalf of KCF Africa, I ceremonially donated 600 chess sets. I also gave numerous interviews, including a one-hour TV show, on the main Ghanaian channel, alongside Philip Ameku, the GCF Vice President. If you consider that there has only been one Elo-rated tournament held in the country previously, and that participation in their flagship event numbered dozens, rather than hundreds, it would perhaps not be too immodest to suggest that this flurry of activity succeeded in raising awareness of the game.

There was a clear public perception in Ghana (and also in Kenya, as I would later discover) that chess is a sport, or recreation, for the elite. This is ironic, given how cheap it is to play. Only by holding more tournaments, increasing involvement and gaining recognition can countries like Ghana hope to catch up. I am, by nature, an optimist, but there remains an awful lot of work to do.

I departed with a yearning to return and a regret that my brief stay could not have been longer, but I had to press on to Cape Town, where the top players were lodged in the comfortable 32-story Cape Sun Hotel, in the Central Business District. During a 15-minute stroll, in the early evening, I received two offers of drugs and four of sex, revealing the edgier side to the city. Nevertheless, despite the slightly seedy nature of the area, there was plenty of visible security and it didn't feel particularly threatening, especially if one took sensible precautions.

From an organiser's perspective, the final tally of just four Grandmasters was perhaps a touch disappointing, but not so surprising given the cost of trekking to Cape Town. I was rated almost 200 points above the second and third seeds, Aleksa Strikovic, from Serbia (who, incidentally, will remain in the country, for a few months, to coach) and the well-known Maharashtran, Abhijit Kunte. Kenny Solomon, who ordinarily resides in Italy, was playing his

first event on home soil since attaining his GM title.

At the risk of sounding like a scratched LP, the format of the event – like so many other Opens worldwide – left a lot to be desired. Given that we had nine available days, why on earth did we play eleven rounds? 'Tradition' is the answer, albeit an inadequate one. And the obvious detriments of the accelerated pairing system, which utterly perverts the natural course of the tournament, far outweigh any real or imagined benefit.

I will spare the readers from a blow-by-blow account of the games, and instead highlight a couple of incidents. In Round 9, I faced the South African IM Daniel Cawdery on Board 1. After blitzing out the opening, my opponent suddenly fell into a prolonged think – apparently wrong-footed by my move-order – consuming at least 40 minutes on the clock. After eventually making a reply, according to witnesses, he then hurried outside the hall, past the ample toilet facilities, and disappeared down the escalator. On his return perhaps 10 minutes or so later he was confronted by an arbiter who asked him where he had been. He answered 'to the toilets, downstairs'. Given the extraordinary ease with which it is possible to cheat these days, I would argue that leaving the 'playing venue', without the arbiter's permission, is a major transgression which should automatically be punishable by forfeit. It is not necessary to prove intent. Alas, the FIDE rules are so poorly-conceived and badly written, by arbiters, for their own benefit, that everything is left to their discretion. Mr. Cawdery was given a stern warning, but allowed to continue. Just three moves later, in an exceedingly miserable, but by no means totally lost position, my opponent abruptly resigned, saying he was unable to concentrate. Well, he wasn't the only one.

'Given the extraordinary ease with which it is possible to cheat these days, I would argue that leaving the "playing venue", without the arbiter's permission, is a major transgression which should automatically be punishable by forfeit.'

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After that unsettling experience, I needed a libation or two, and headed off with Andrew Fisher, the tournament organiser, to the Beer House, on Long Street. Bewildered by the profuse choice on offer, I had no idea what to order until my eyes chanced upon a potent Scottish beverage called 'Brewdog Hardcore', which was described as 'an extreme beer rollercoaster for freaks, gypsies and international chess superstars'. If that was not an omen, nothing is.

With the three top seeds all facing much lower rated opposition in the last round, a three-way tie appeared likely. However, Strikovic almost found himself in trouble against Advocate Lyndon Bouah, and narrowly escaped, whilst Kunte was unable to overcome the stout defence of Johannes Mabusela. Victory was now within my grasp, and with two knights and a pawn for a rook, against Watu Kobese, should have been trivial. Unfortunately (perhaps still suffering from the after-effects of an excess of Brewdog) I blundered badly, allowing a draw. I nevertheless still took the trophy on tiebreak.

From Cape Town I flew to Johannesburg to lecture for a couple of days at an excellent coaching programme, run by Nicholas van der Nat. I endured a highly stressful 20-board clock simul in which I narrowly avoided being flagged by several conspirators, most notably a sneaky young guy from Lesotho, who brought me down to under 30 seconds by the simple expediency of always waiting until my back was turned, before quickly moving.

After working non-stop for over a fortnight, I needed a break. I had always dreamed of visiting the Victoria Falls and now, being just 1,200 km away, I could follow in the metaphorical footsteps of the great Scottish explorer and ineffectual missionary David Livingstone – albeit in somewhat greater comfort.

Arriving at Oliver Tambo Airport, however, it transpired that I was the sole passenger booked on the Air Zimbabwe Boeing 737. Rather than cancelling the flight, as any normal airline would have done, in the commendable spirit of 'the customer comes first' they flew me there alone. This unusual and amusing experience – one in which all announcements were addressed to me personally – received widespread international publicity, on the *BBC World Service*, *NBC*, *Die Welt* and countless other media outlets.

I returned to Monte Casino, in Johannesburg, to briefly visit the third and final Millionaire Chess Satellite tournament. This series has proven wildly popular throughout the continent, with the lure of an all-expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas generating unprecedented excitement. A well-attended impromptu evening Q&A session at the venue, photos galore and convivial dinner afterwards completed my southern African obligations.

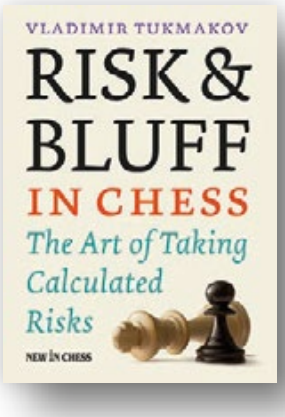
Thence I departed for Nairobi for the final leg of my 'safari' (literally 'expedition' in Swahili). It was a pleasure to be met by Githinji Hinga, Chairman and Delegate of Chess Kenya, and an eloquent adversary of the disreputable rabble that has misgoverned international chess for so long. After dumping my suitcase at the grand old British hotel 'The Stanley' in the centre of town, we headed for the Gymkhana Club where the Kenyan Rapid and Blitz National Chess Championships were taking place. The sweet sound of leather on willow could be heard outside on the same cricket ground where a teenage Shahid Afridi famously smashed the fastest ever century in his first innings for Pakistan.

Chess has grown rapidly in Kenya under the stewardship of Githinji and his able assistants. Both membership and the numbers of rated players have quadrupled in the past couple of years – an expansion that it is set to continue with the provision of several thousand sets – courtesy of KCF Africa – for prudent distribution throughout the provinces. It just shows what can be achieved when people care.

My agenda consisted of a 30-board simul (in which I won all the games), lecture, plus plenty of schmoozing with the fans. The PR side was handled by the charming Purity Maina, who is awaiting ratification to become the first female International Arbiter from East Africa. As usual, interviews with mainstream media were hit and miss, varying across the spectrum from a resoundingly successful breakfast programme on K24 television, which included a couple of anarchic games of bullet chess, to the painful 'Nation' show, where a rookie presenter began by asking 'Who is Nigel Short?' (A legitimate question, perhaps, but why had I been invited as a guest on the show?). Such mishaps can be tolerated when one bears in mind that chess is not football, and that any TV coverage is worth its weight in gold. All in all, it was a great trip – although a lot of hard work – and one which I would be happy to repeat. ■

Life is lonely at the top. Boarding the plane to Zimbabwe our columnist discovered that he was the only passenger.

Some recent NEW IN CHESS books



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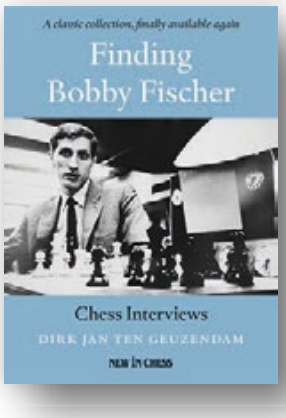

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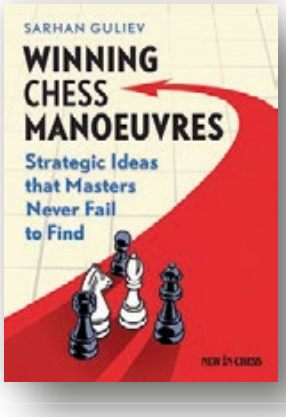

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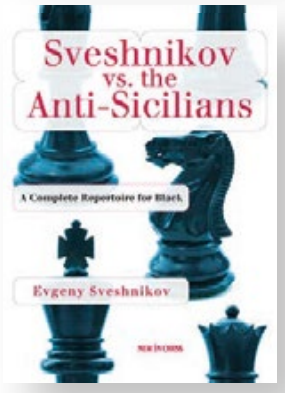

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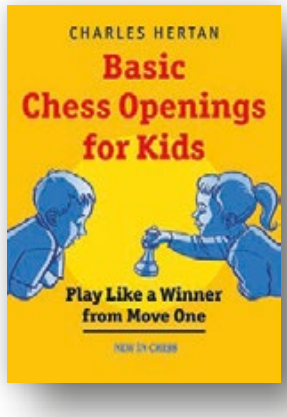

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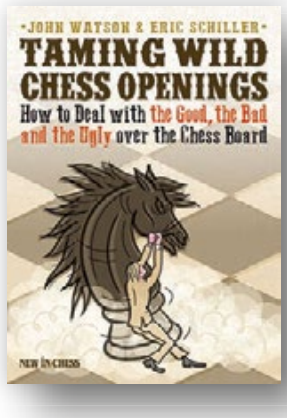
JOHN WATSON & ERIC SCHILLER
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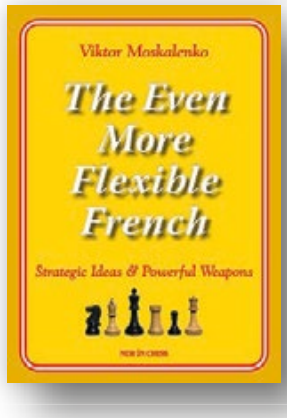

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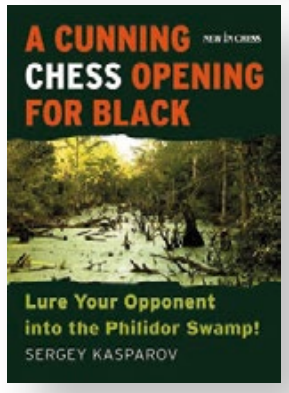

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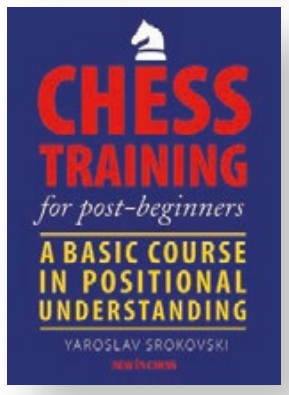

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The Opening Trap

Openings. Love them or hate them, but there's no way around the initial moves of a game. So how do you study openings without drowning in an ocean of variations? **PARIMARJAN NEGI** shows you the way.

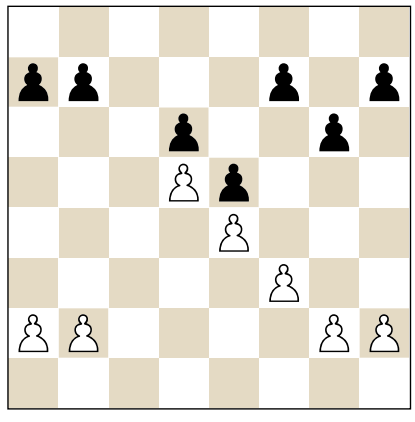
Some of the most common questions I am asked by beginners are related to opening problems. 'What books would you recommend?' 'How much time should I spend on openings?' 'What are the best openings?' And so on.

The Russian school tells you that you should first study endgames, then middlegames, and only then start studying the openings. Sounds ideal, but you don't want to study chess forever before even venturing out into tournaments. You can't just start the game knowing absolutely nothing. Yet, there is a fine balance between knowing just enough to survive, and knowing so much that it hinders your development.

What's more, openings don't always need to be studied for improving your results. You can also study them purely from an aesthetic point of view – like a work of art. Unlike before, today you have access to large swathes of knowledge and research garnered by some of the best chess minds over the decades.

But the single worst thing you can do when studying openings is to try and memorize them. I was guilty of this as a kid as well, but luckily I had coaches who never emphasized that, and I largely survived my early chess years without opening theory holding back the development of the rest of the game.

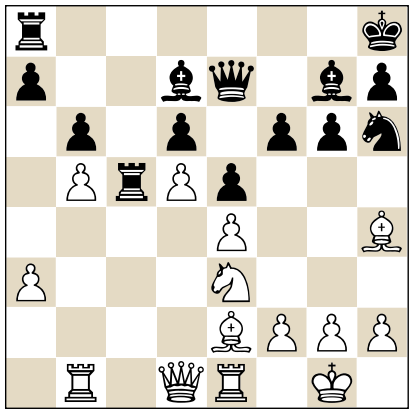
One of the key ways to study openings is through ideas: lines come and go, but the underlying themes remain constant. Even in the most complicated lines, it's little use to remember a forced line, but much more useful to know the ideas that you can use to think and create those lines yourself. The problem is that it's much harder to study ideas. While every opening book makes a cursory mention of the few major ideas, very few go out of their way to actually distil the knowledge for you. One such book is *Pawn Structures* by Mauricio Flores. I had heard good things about it, but I didn't pick it up myself until I had to coach a young kid in an opening that I wasn't so familiar with. At first sight, Flores's book doesn't seem to have much to do with openings – after all pawn structures are far more generic – but the excellent thing that distinguishes this book is that the structures are neatly divided into opening categories. There's a bunch of different Spanish structures, there are King's Indian structures, and so forth. This is conceptually a great way to start studying openings. After all, in most openings there can be pieces on different squares, but the pawn structures are much more static and immutable. And so it's an excellent idea to set up the typical structures and then discuss the ideas behind the openings. For instance, look at the following generic structure:



This is one of the many different structures that Mauricio discusses. The King's Indian is a huge opening, and analysing the many lines will of course take a lot of time. But if you reduce it to three or four possible structures, suddenly you have a manageable problem at hand. Looking at this structure, he discusses various ideas for both sides, as well as possible plans. This is just a great way to study openings! Another exercise I suggest before reading Mauricio's explanations is to first set up the pawn structure on a board – and stare at it for a bit. Then imagine you can set up your pieces on any reasonable squares (generally, on your side of the board) – and start setting them up. For instance, ♗f2, ♗f1, ♘c3, ♘d3, ♖c1, ♖c2, could be a nice-looking setup) Do the same for the other side – or have a friend / coach do it. Then play around a bit. Maybe even go back and see if you think you can improve the piece placement. All this might seem very abstract, but knowing where the pieces ought to go is a very critical feeling that guides your decisions during the openings. No matter how well you are prepared, you will, sooner rather

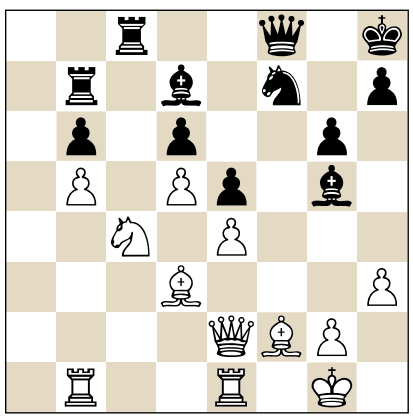
than later, run out of your home preparation, and then you need to be ready to know how to manoeuvre your pieces.

Mauricio Flores follows up this explanation with several instructive examples. Here is one of them. I haven't reproduced any of his comments; instead I've just added some light comments of my own to show how the ideas are emphasized and why this approach is useful.



Carlsen-McShane
London 2009
position after 22...♖xc5

At first sight, Black does not seem to be doing badly, but as Mauricio explains, it is hard for Black to generate enough counterplay here, whereas White has the nice plan of eventually transferring the e3-knight to c6 or just c4.
23.f3 ♖ac8 24.♗d3 ♕f8 25.♗f2 f5 26.a4 ♖5c7 27.h3 ♗f6 28.♕d2
28.♘c2 would also have been perfectly fine, but White goes for another plan.
28...♗g5 29.a5 fxe4 30.fxe4 ♘f7 31.axb6 axb6 32.♕e2 ♖b7 33.♘c4



And White was clearly better and went on to win. As we have seen, once you assess the position correctly, everything becomes easy and flows naturally.

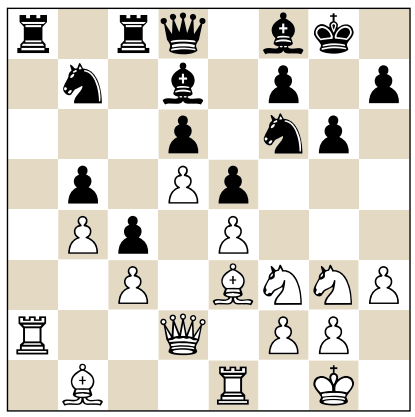
Of course, Black could have played better, but there was nothing obvious that he did wrong. Yet his position looks so much worse now than it did before.

Of course there are other books that do similar things – but this one is unique in the sense that it does *only this* and doesn't focus on opening theory at all.

Considering the fact that I spend a lot of my free time writing tomes of opening theory *(Grandmaster Repertoire, 1.e4),* I should probably mention how those books compare to this different approach to openings. When I am writing such books, I try, at the start of every new line, to lay down the groundwork – the ideas that I aim to follow, the 'rules', and so on. I try to explain some of the lines in words as well, but this is not always possible or required. So, for the majority of people just starting out on openings, these books are not a good starting point, or you should not use these books just yet. The ultimate aim of the series is to establish some sort of temporary truth in these lines, often going to ridiculous depths to achieve this. This interests many professionals, and might be of interest to other players from an aesthetic perspective, as I said earlier – but it certainly teaches the players very little in their early developmental stages.

> 'One of the key ways to study openings is through ideas: lines come and go, but the underlying themes remain constant.'

Another way to approach the openings is to just study classical games in the lines you feel attracted to. True, it's a slightly slower process, but it is quite possibly the best way to get to understand an opening. Someone once said that you aren't a complete player until you can play the Spanish (well) with both colours. This may seem like an exaggeration, but it perfectly sums up a critical idea: there have been so many great players who've contributed to our knowledge of these Spanish structures that in order to be able to play them well, you need to understand those ideas. And if you understand those ideas, this will reflect very positively on your chess skills. Also, in the Spanish, unlike in many other openings, you can't quite get by with memorizing a bunch of random lines and tricks. There are just too many possibilities, and it always comes down to new positions in which you need to prove your mettle. I had seen countless examples before I began to get even an inkling of the depth of the ideas in the Spanish, but here is one of the very first ones that left a deep impression.

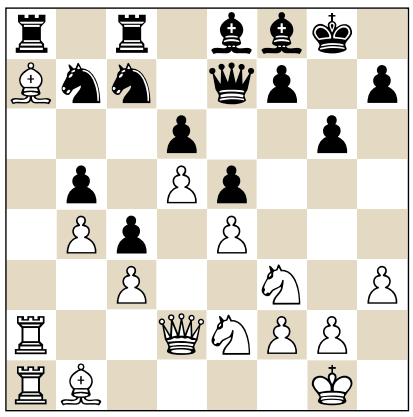


Karpov-Unzicker
Nice 1974
position after 23...♕d8

A well-known position. Black is ready to exchange the rooks along the a-file, after which it will be much harder for White to generate anything on the queenside. Here Karpov played the amazing: **24.♗a7!**
This absolutely paralyzes Black's queenside. The rest of the game was elementary technique, as White brought his other rook to the queenside, seemingly with the intention of penetrating via the a-file, but ending

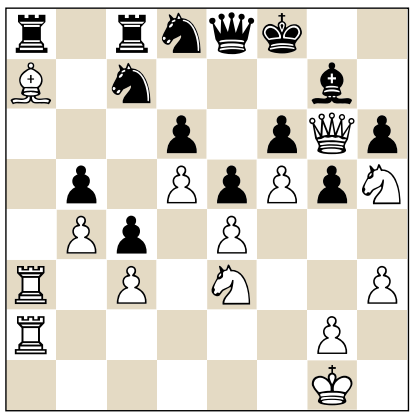
up completely suffocating Black, who was keeping himself ready for the bishop retreat that never happened.

24...♘e8 25.♗c2 ♘c7 26.♖ea1 ♕e7 27.♗b1 ♗e8 28.♘e2



White shows that he is in no hurry to do anything, which is a very important lesson to learn in the Spanish. The rest of the game is not so important for our topic, but just have a look at it because of its wonderful execution.

28...♘d8 29.♘h2 ♗g7 30.f4 f6 31.f5 g5 32.♗c2 ♗f7 33.♘g3 ♘b7 34.♗d1 h6 35.♗h5 ♕e8 36.♕d1 ♘d8 37.♖a3 ♔f8 38.♖1a2 ♔g8 39.♘g4 ♔f8 40.♘e3 ♔g8 41.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 42.♕h5 ♘d8 43.♕g6 ♔f8 44.♘h5



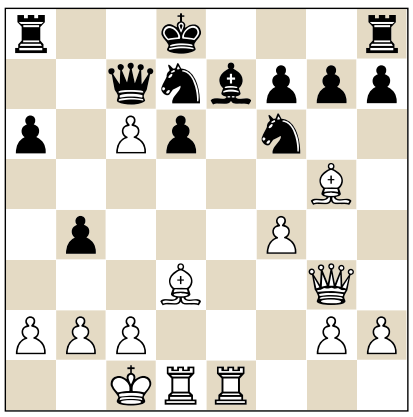
And Black resigned.

This game shows many important lessons that are crucial for the Spanish: the slow manoeuvres, keeping Black's knights out of the game, the importance of playing on both sides, etc. One game certainly will not make you a better Spanish player, but studying many games of players like Karpov will give you a much better sense of the opening than any number of theoretical variations.

You can't fathom all ideas from reading a book, or listening to a coach, or playing through classical games – you need to actually play the openings. Everyone knows a few opening moves, but beyond that, you need to be willing to play these lines, and try to find the best moves yourself, so you can test the ideas you know and get a better understanding of them. If you do well in those attempts, it's great, but otherwise these games serve as important lessons that you can analyse and learn from. I have played the Najdorf for many years now, with more than excellent results, but I remember I almost gave it up at the very start because of a string of losses.

Don't rush to play known moves

When I talk about learning openings while playing them, it's never easy to separate the moves that 'you know to be correct' from the moves that you have to play after that. Still, if you're on familiar ground, that doesn't mean that you need to rush through these moves. Actually, that's one of the worst things you can do for that particular game, and your chess in general for that matter. In the following example, I was already a GM, but I was still a very inexperienced, naive kid. As I mentioned before, I hadn't worked much on openings as an (even) younger kid, but after becoming a GM, I started doing so with a little too much intensity. The result was ridiculous: long lines of preparation.



Berg-Negi
Wijk aan Zee 2007
position after 16.dxc6

This is another well-known position. Here I had spent ages analysing an obscure line that I was very proud of:

16...♘b6!? 17.♗h4 ♖g8 18.♖e2

White continues in the usual way.

18...♕xc6! 19.♗xh7 ♖e8 20.♕xg7 ♘xh7 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7 22.♖e1 ♖aa7 23.♕xf7 ♘c8

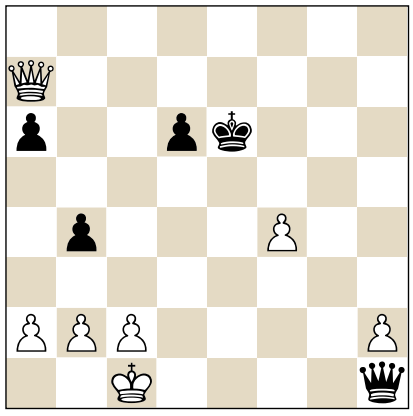
You could say that my preparation had started here. The computer prefers White, but after a lot of heroic acrobatics I had almost proved that Black should be OK in various lines. Having already spent almost an hour, Berg did not find the most challenging reply and went for:

24.♕xh7 ♕xg2!

This equalizes immediately, as I had analysed, of course.

25.♕h8+ ♔d7 26.♗xe7 ♘xe7 27.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 28.♕h7+ ♔e6 29.♕xa7 ♕h1+

And I had stopped around here in my analysis. During the game I was ready to go home after a job well done...



30.♔d2 ♕g2+?!

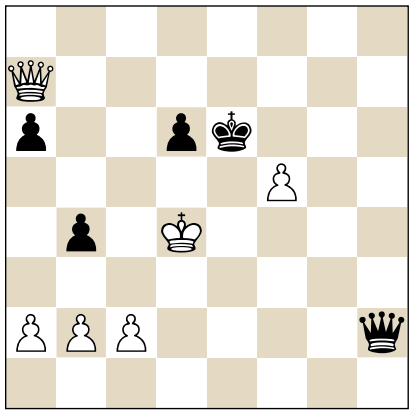
30...♕xh2+ seems a much easier way to make a draw – if I had only stopped to look.

31.♔d1 ♕f1+ 32.♔d2 ♕g2+ 33.♔e1!

The first signs of trouble... But I did not quite feel like thinking much, so I kept playing at the same high speed.

33...♕e4+ 34.♔f1! ♕c4+ 35.♔g2 ♕e4+ 35...♕xc2+ was probably better and still equal, but I would have been a pawn down, and it required some precise calculation.

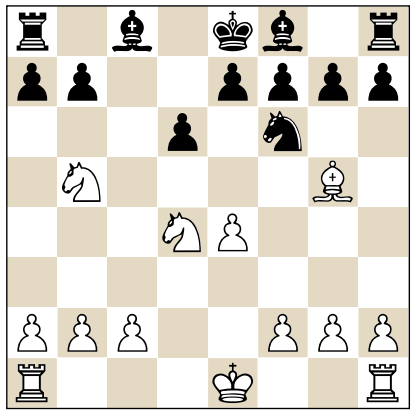
36.♔g3 ♕g6+ 37.♔f3 ♕h5+ 38.♔g3 ♕g6+ 39.♔f3 ♕h5+ 40.♔e3 ♕h3+ 41.♔d4 ♕xh2 42.f5+!



And it is surprisingly hard to hold this position. The white king goes on the rampage and Black's pawns are quite weak... Of course I had defensive chances, but I was hardly in a mood to calculate, and lost without much of a fight.

In fact, the biggest problem of rattling these known moves off in a game is that you start hoping that you don't have to play any move of your own. You want the game to end as soon as your preparation ends. The first 'new' move your opponent makes is so annoying… And very often you're just not ready to start thinking or fighting. You'll see that this is even very common among strong GM's. Therefore it is really important to guard against it at lower levels, as it happens too often that players make a careless mistake right after coming out of their preparation.

Fortunately, this problem can be solved, too! Just don't play those moves so fast! It's true, you see many GM's (sometimes even me!) rattle off moves in the opening – after all, who likes to think about stuff you already know. But it's not the best practice even for strong players, although they are more experienced and can focus again when faced with a new move (or so they believe). But at lower levels this is so much harder. So instead, do yourself a favour and keep thinking even while playing all those moves that you have already seen on a computer screen or on the pages of a book. Ask yourself what you would have done otherwise. Ask yourself what the ideas might be. Thinking during the game is always a lot more effective than some casual thinking during preparation. This will not only prepare you for starting to think seriously when the game goes beyond the bounds of the opening, but will also help you remember the ideas better for the future. And sometimes, what may be the 'correct' move for someone else might not be so great for you. Moreover, you could avoid disasters like the one I had in the following game:



Zhigalko-Negi
Kirishi 2007
position after 9.♘fxd4

We had had this position on the board while preparing for the game. And here, after some computer analysis, my coach had suggested the pawn sacrifice 9...♖b8. We hadn't analysed it too much, but during the game I did not want to actually start thinking, of course. So I instantly played:

9...♖b8?!

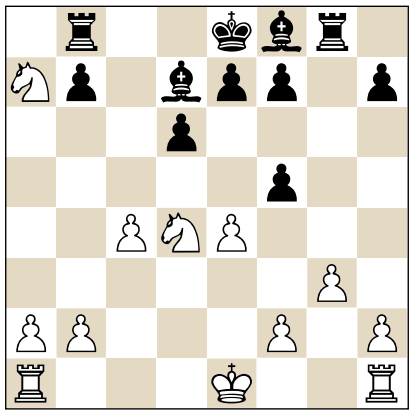
I think I was even hoping that he might be too scared to take the pawn, when I might have made a draw without even being tested. This kind of thinking is the worst result of preparing too much... You start hoping for easy solutions.

10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♘xa7

Suddenly nothing seemed easy anymore. I spent forever trying to think of some compensation and regretting 9...♖b8. If only I had thought a little longer before playing 9...♖b8 in the first place... I doubt I would have voluntarily entered a position like this, which seems lost unless Black gets some immediate counterplay.

11...♗d7 12.c4?! ♖g8 13.g3 f5!

Finally I did find an idea, and got good compensation... But I had spent so long regretting 9...♖b8 and trying to desperately find compensation that I was now left with very little time to make use of it.



14.♘xf5 d5? This looked too nice to resist. The computer points out that 14...♖a8 would give Black excellent compensation if he plays precisely.

15.♘b5! dxc4 16.♘c7+ ♔d8 17.♘d5

And White had a clear advantage and won (1-0, 49).

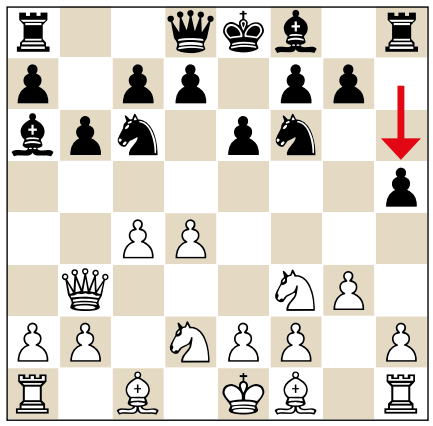
This also applies to your preparation – regardless of whether you're using computers, chess books or the suggestions of a coach. A good rule of thumb is: *do not* accept moves whose ideas you don't understand. You know the limits to your understanding – and it doesn't matter how much theory is out there – if you can understand the ideas behind a line, go for it. If you can't, forget it.

Conclusion

The best way to study openings is through structures and ideas. That way, you give yourself the ability to create moves in the opening that are suitable for you. But it's also a slow learning process. In case you do have to study more theory: make sure you understand the ideas behind each move. If you don't, you'd better not play it. There are a lot of good moves possible in most lines. And make sure you keep trying to understand these ideas even while playing the game – after all, what's the hurry? ■

Houdini's Neanderthal Attack in the Queen's Indian

Jeroen Bosch



6....h5!?

'As we had been playing on the queenside for the past few moves, this looks like an almost random stab on the other side of the board.'

Surely one of the most respectable chess openings is the Queen's Indian with 4.g3. After Nimzowitsch's 4...♗a6 (4...♗b7 is the classical reply) White usually protects the pawn with 5.b3, which has the disadvantages of weakening the a5-e1 diagonal (a knight on c3 will be unprotected) and limiting the prospects of the white queen (not to mention the huge body of theory). Therefore, 5.♘bd2 is also played, while queen moves to defend the c4-pawn are popular as well (5.♕c2, 5.♕a4 and 5.♕b3).

Recently, a completely new way of combating the latter has come to the fore, and this is the subject of this SOS.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.♕b3

An interesting move that has been played since 1981, and has remained popular with strong players.

5...♘c6

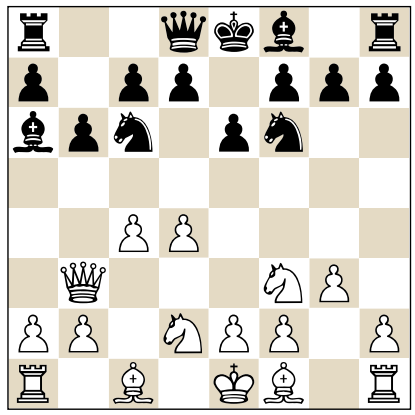
This knight move has established itself as the best reply. Black re-introduces and develops the attack on the c-pawn (6...♘a5).

6.♘bd2

White anticipates ...♘a5 by protecting the c-pawn, at the same time preparing e2-e4.

White also plays 6.♗d2 to prevent ...♘a5, when 6...♗b7 is the main reply, but the less orthodox 6...♖b8!? is interesting. The idea is to meet 7.♗g2 with 7...b5 or with 7...♘a5.

But let's return to 6.♘bd2.



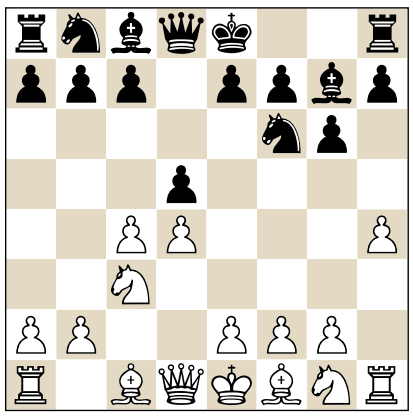
6...h5!?

As we had been playing on the queenside for the past few moves, this looks like an almost random stab on the other side of the board. A crude Neanderthal attack, throwing the h-pawn forward without restraint and without any apparent reason. It reminds me of an old anecdote in Dutch chess circles about a training session for Dutch juniors conducted by grandmaster Hans Ree. In a 'normal position', a young Manuel Bosboom (famous for his 1999 blitz win over Kasparov) suggested the random ...h7-h5, which earned him the somewhat stern reply from the grandmaster that 'we don't look at such moves'. Bosboom's instant reply was that after the next move the pawn would be on h4, when he would be forced to look at it!

Indeed, give Black one more move here, and that pawn on h4 will be very annoying – especially since 8.♘xh4 would be met by 8...♘xd4.

This threat to a central pawn is some-

what comparable to an SOS system versus the Grünfeld, where after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.h4 ♗g7



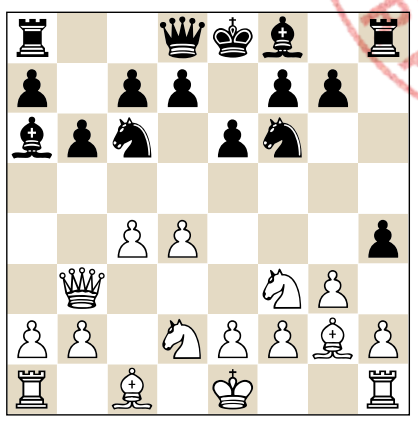
White has 5.h5 ♘xh5 6.cxd5, and it suddenly becomes clear that an h-pawn can influence the battle for the centre.

On the website chess-news.ru, David Navara, who was the first player to employ 6...h5, was asked how he had hit upon this remarkable idea. The Czech grandmaster's reply was somewhat surprising in that he modestly declared that 6...h5 had been found by the engine Houdini 3. Navara explained that he hadn't really analysed 6...h5, but that, when he was surprised by Damaso in the 2015 European Championship, this seemed like an appropriate and creative reply – a lovely example of how the use of engines can foster creativity instead of suppressing it.

Instead of 6...h5 Black usually plays 6...♘a5 (alternatives are 6...d5 and 6...♗b7) 7.♕a4 ♗b7 8.♗g2, and now Black normally continues with 8...c5, but in his game against Feller (Montpellier 2015) Navara played 8...♖c8.

Besides David Navara, the recent winner of the Najdorf memorial Igor Kovalenko has also used 6...h5 (turning the tables in a lost position, as we will see). In both these games White continued actively with 7.e4 (correct according to the hackneyed recipe that a flank attack should be met by one in the centre). Let's briefly look at a few other possibilities:

■ Normal development with 7.♗g2 is indeed met by 7...h4, when White is forced to take the pawn into account:



Now it is obvious that Black is doing well after 8.♘xh4?! ♘xd4 9.♕d3 ♘c6 or 8.gxh4?! ♗b7. The same goes for 8.e4 hxg3 (8...h3) 9.hxg3 ♖xh1+ 10.♗xh1 ♘g4.

After 8.♘e5?! ♘xd4 9.♕d3 c5 10.e3 h3 11.♗xa8 ♕xa8 Black has great compensation for the exchange.

In a very recent game Kovalenko was confronted with 8.♕a4. After the reply 8...♗b7 9.♘e5 hxg3 10.hxg3 ♖xh1+ 11.♗xh1 ♘a5 12.♗xb7 ♘xb7 13.♘df3 White was sightly better, Romanov-Kovalenko, Liepaja 2015. However, instead of 8...♗b7 much more consistent was 8...h3!, with the neat point that after 9.♗xh3 (9.♕xa6 hxg2 10.♖g1 g5!; 9.♗f1 ♗b7) 9...♗b7 10.♗g2 ♘xd4 Black is slightly better.

White's healthiest reply is 8.0-0, when 8...hxg3 (8...♗b7 and 8...♗e7 are also playable) 9.hxg3 ♗b7 gives rise to an interesting game.

■ 7.e3 protects pawn d4, but it weakens the light squares and, strangely enough, does nothing to prevent 7...h4 (also good is 7...♗b7 8.♗g2 h4) and if 8.♘xh4 then 8...g5 9.♘hf3 (9.♘g2 ♗b7) 9...g4 10.♘h4 ♗b7 favours Black, since 11.♗g2? is a blunder due to 11...♖xh4 12.gxh4 ♘a5.

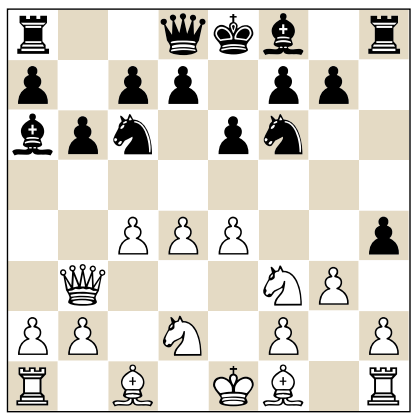
■ 7.h4 weakens the g4-square, and leaves Black better after, for example, 7...♗b7 8.e4 (8.♗g2? ♘xd4; 8.e3 a5) 8...♘g4 9.d5 ♘b4 (9...♗c5!?) 10.a3 ♘a6 11.♗g2 ♘c5 12.♕c2 a5.

■ It is better to anticipate ...h4 with 7.h3 ♗b7 (7...h4!? 8.g4 ♗b7; 7...d5) 8.e4 h4!? 9.g4 a5!?, and Larsen would have approved of Black's use of his rook pawns.

■ White has nothing to show for the pawn after 7.d5 exd5 8.cxd5 ♘a5 9.♕a4 ♘xd5 10.e4 (10.♕e4+ ♘e7) 10...♗xf1 11.♔xf1 ♘b4.

As mentioned above, in the only two practical examples with 6...h5 so far play has continued:

7.e4 h4



Let's have a look at the two games.

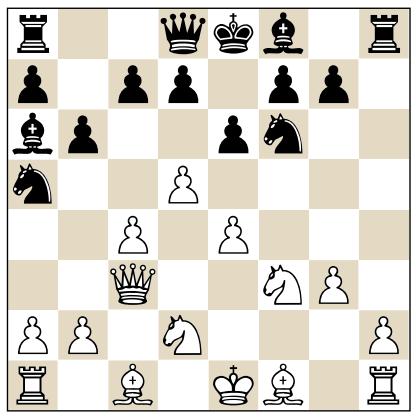
Damaso-Navara

8.♕a4 The stronger 8.e5 was played in our next game.

White should not take on h4. Thus, after 8.♘xh4? ♘xd4 Black has traded a rook pawn for an important central pawn and is better. And if 8.gxh4, then simply 8...♗b7 is fine. Worse is 8...e5?! as 9.d5 (not 9.dxe5 ♘g4) 9...♘d4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♘f3 ♕e7 13.♗f4 favours White.

Black is slightly better after 8.♗g2 hxg3 9.hxg3 ♖xh1+ 10.♗xh1 ♘g4 11.♗g2 ♕f6!.

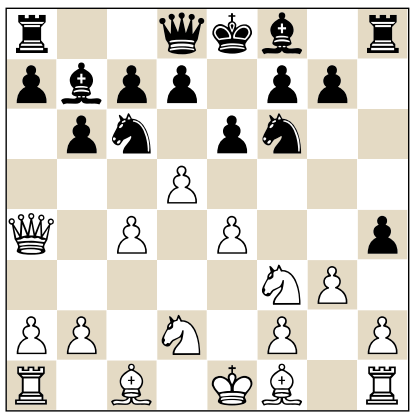
Advancing the d-pawn is only dangerous for White: 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♕c3 (9.♕c2? hxg3 10.fxg3 ♘g4 is very awkward to meet) 9...hxg3 10.fxg3



and now 10...exd5 11.cxd5 ♗xf1 12.♔xf1 ♕e7 13.♔g2 ♘xd5! 14.exd5 ♕e2+ 15.♔g1 ♕d1+ 16.♔g2 ♕e2+ is a funny perpetual. Superior is 10...♕e7!, when after 11.d6! cxd6 12.b4 ♘xc4 13.♗xc4 ♖c8 14.0-0 ♗xc4 15.♘xc4 ♘xe4 16.♕d3 d5 the pawns are stronger than the extra piece. Black is clearly better.

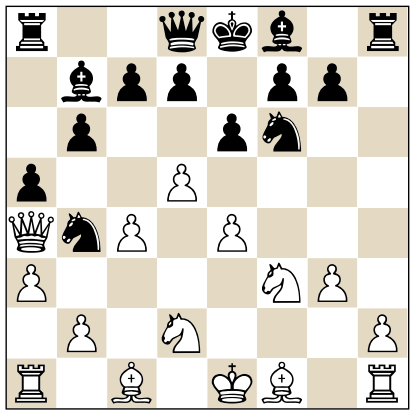
8...♗b7 9.d5

This is more or less forced. After the natural 9.♗g2, Black has 9...hxg3 10.hxg3 ♖xh1+ 11.♗xh1 ♘g4, and the knight is very well-placed on g4, while 12...♕f6 is an unpleasant threat. This is a recurrent theme, and one of the main ideas behind 6...h5.



9...hxg3! 10.dxc6

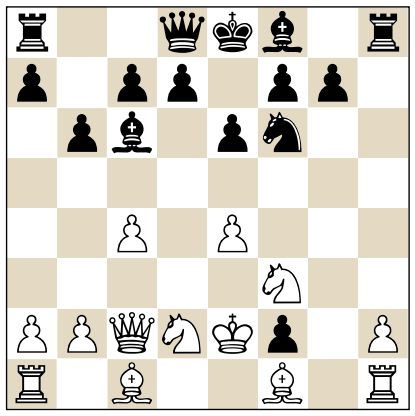
10.fxg3 ♘b4 11.a3 a5! is a neat trick.



Black has earned himself numerous positional pluses with the crude 6...h5. There is indeed method in this madness!

10...♗xc6 Or the immediate 10...gxf2+. **11.♕c2 gxf2+ 12.♔e2**

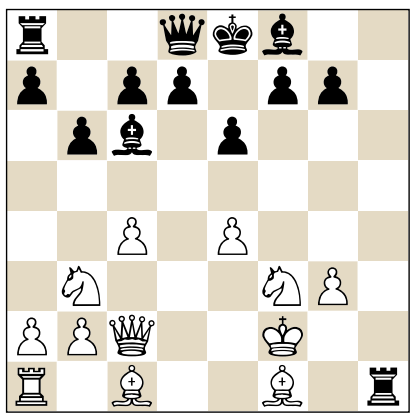
Taking the pawn has equally dire consequences. After 12.♔xf2 ♘g4+ 13.♔e1 ♕f6! 14.♕c3!? ♕f4 Black has two pawns for the piece and tremendous positional compensation, while White's king isn't likely to find a safe spot any time soon.



12...♘h5?!

The human way of playing. Navara is trying to retrieve material. It would, in fact, have been better for Black to exploit his considerable positional capital with 12...♗c5! (although we should mention that Black, with three pawns for the knight, is doing quite well from a material point of view, too). After something like 13.♗g2 ♕e7 Black is ready to castle queenside. His position should be winning.

13.♘b3 ♘g3+?! 14.hxg3 ♖xh1 15.♔xf2



Black now has a rook and two pawns versus two knights. He is still a little better, but the major part of his advantage has been lost. Navara now makes a further mistake by sacrificing an exchange.

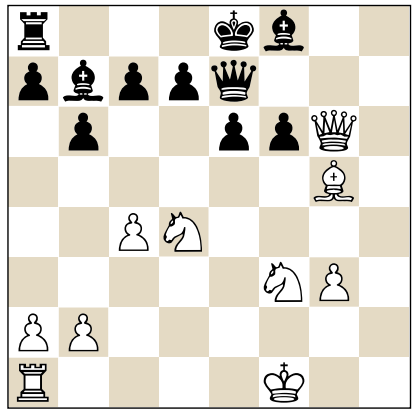
15...♖xf1+?! 16.♔xf1 ♕f6 17.♘d4!

It is possible that Navara had underestimated this move; 17...e5? now fails to 18.♗g5.

17...♗b7 18.e5 ♕e7 19.♗g5?!

Correct was 19.♗f4 0-0-0 20.♔e2!?, when Black will try to create some play with 20...f6 – the move that White actually forces Black to play in the game!

19...f6 20.exf6 gxf6 21.♕g6+



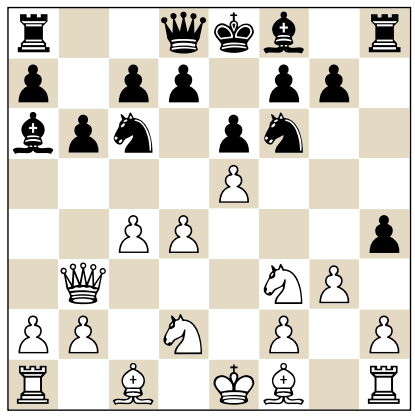
This was Damaso's point. The queens will be traded. Perhaps he had missed Black's 23rd move?

21...♕f7 22.♕xf6 ♕xf6 23.♗xf6 c5 Black regains the piece. **24.♘xe6 dxe6 25.♘e5 ♗e7 26.♗xe7 ♔xe7 27.♖d1 ♔f6**

Black has a slight endgame edge now and won on move 74.

Sunilduth-Kovalenko

8.e5 This is stronger than 8.♕a4, which we saw in the previous game.



8...♘g4

The normal way of playing. However, in contrast to many lines we saw in Damaso-Navara, White can still contest control of square g4.

Black might like to consider the piece sacrifice 8...hxg3 9.exf6 gxf2+ 10.♔xf2 ♕xf6. At first sight he appears to lack full compensation after 11.♘e4! (11.d5?! ♘d4 12.♘e4 – 12.♕c3 ♗c5 – 12...♕f5 13.♕d3 exd5) 11...♕g6, but White will have difficulties consolidating.

The piece sacrifice probably does not fully hold up to analytical scrutiny, but the practical problems for White are considerable.

9.♗h3!

This is clearly the best move. 9.gxh4 ♕e7 favours Black. He will castle queenside and play ...f6.

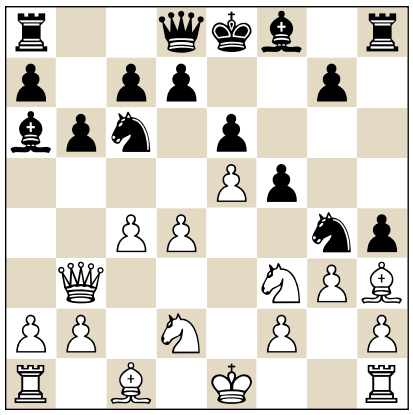
Black is better after 9.♗g2 h3 10.♗f1 ♗b7 11.♗e2 d6.

9.h3? hxg3 is worse, of course.

9...♘h6?

After this retreat White gains a huge initiative in the centre.

Black should have kept his knight in position with 9...f5!.



Bad is 10.♗xg4 hxg3! 11.fxg3 fxg4 12.♕d3 ♕e7 (12...♘e7) 13.♕g6+ ♕f7 14.♕xg4 ♗b4, and White is in trouble.

10.gxh4 can be met by 10...♕e7, and even by the more spectacular 10...♘xf2 11.♔xf2 ♘xd4 12.♕d3 ♗c5.

So White should continue with 10.exf6 ♘xf6, when 11.♕c2 (11.♗g2 h3; 11.♕d3 hxg3 12.hxg3 – nothing is gained by 12.♕g6+ ♔e7 13.hxg3 ♕e8 – 12...♗d6) 11...hxg3 12.hxg3 ♗d6 13.♗g2 (13.♕g6+ ♔f8 is a shot in the dark) 13...♖xh1+ 14.♗xh1 ♔f8!? leads to an approximately equal position.

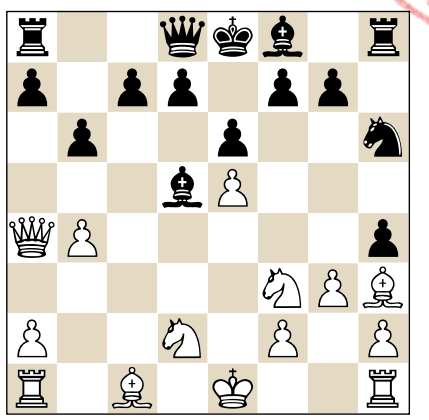
After the text White takes over with:

10.d5! ♘a5

10...exd5 11.cxd5 ♘b4 12.♘c4 (12.♗f1 ♗b7) 12...hxg3 13.hxg3 ♘xd5 looks rather messy, but I am afraid that Black is just worse after 14.0-0 ♗e7 15.♖d1 c6 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.exd6, with tremendous compensation for only one sacrificed pawn.

11.♕c3 Threatening 12.b4.

This is stronger than 11.♕a4 ♗b7! 12.b4 (12.♘e4) 12...♘xc4 13.♘xc4 ♗xd5 14.♘cd2



when Black has fair compensation for the piece after 14...a5! 15.b5 ♗b4.

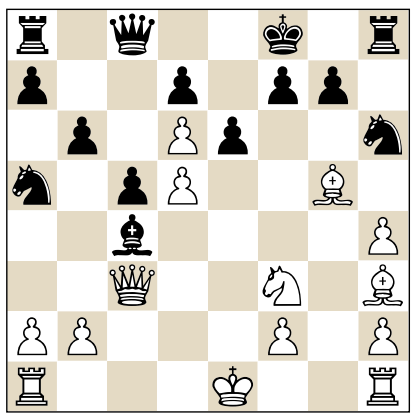
11...c5

This saves the piece, but leaves Black positionally busted. White is better after other moves, too, but for our purpose it is not necessary to go into them. From an opening point of view Black absolutely has to play 9...f5!. Let's just enjoy the remainder of the game with a few brief notes.

12.♘e4?!

12.♘xh4! was excellent for White.

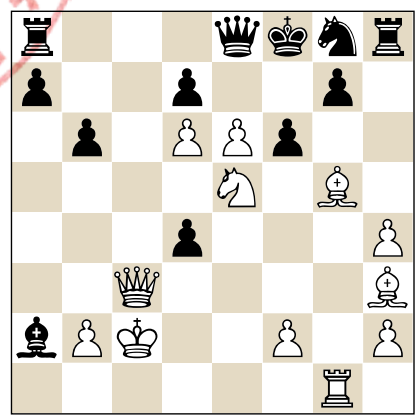
12...♗xc4 13.♗g5 ♕c8 13...♕c7 14.0-0-0!. **14.♘d6+ ♗xd6 15.exd6 ♔f8 16.gxh4!**



Opening the g-file. White is attacking with nearly all his pieces. He is winning at this stage.

16...♘g8 17.♖g1 Or 17.dxe6! ♗xe6 18.♗xe6 dxe6 19.♘e5, winning. **17...f6 18.♘e5! ♕e8** 18...fxg5 19.♘g6+ is simple, and on 18...fxe5, 19.♕xe5 ♖h7 20.♕e4 ♖h8 21.♕g6 ♕e8 22.♗e7+ wins the house. **19.0-0-0** Or 19.♗f4! fxe5 20.♗xe5, winning.

19...♗xa2 20.dxe6 ♘b3+ 21.♔c2 ♘d4+ 22.♖xd4! cxd4



23.e7+? Any normal queen move wins (23.♕f3, 23.♕d3, 23.♕g3), while 23.♗xf6!! is for engines. It wins in all lines: 23...gxf6 (23...dxc3 24.♗xg7 mate; 23...♘xf6 24.e7+ ♔g8 25.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 26.♕g3+) 24.♕g3 ♖c8+ 25.♔d2, and mate follows.

23...♘xe7 24.dxe7+?

24.♕f3! ♘d5 25.♘xd7+ ♔f7, and now engines will find 26.♔d2!!, when the threat of 27.♖e1 cannot be parried.

24...♕xe7 25.♘g6+ Both queens are hanging, but White's attack has petered out, and Black has sufficient pawns for the piece that he will be down.

25...♔f7 26.♘xh8+ ♖xh8 27.♕f3 ♕c5+ 28.♔d1 ♗d5 29.♕d3 ♗c4 30.♕f3 ♕b5! Kovalenko no longer lets go of his prey. White cannot avoid a losing endgame.

31.♗f5 ♕b3+ 32.♕xb3 ♗xb3+ 33.♔d2 fxg5 34.hxg5 ♖xh2 35.♖f1? 35.♔e2. **35...♗c4 36.♗d3 d5 37.♔e2 ♖h3 38.♗xc4 dxc4 39.♖a1 ♖b3 40.♖xa7+ ♔g6 41.♖c7 b5** And White resigned.

Conclusion

We have seen that 6...h5 is an excellent new opening idea. While Black appears at first sight to start a crude attack, there are in fact many fine strategic points behind the push of the h-pawn. Paradoxically, Black can be said to follow a central strategy with 6...h5 and 7...h4!. Critical is 7.e4 h4 8.e5 ♘g4 9.♗h3, and now my suggested improvement of 9...f5 gives Black a perfectly playable position. ■

NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

Sadler on Books

Insiders' Insights

Five stars for Boris Gelfand's *Positional Decision Making in Chess*! If approached in the right manner, **MATTHEW SADLER** believes that 'this book has masses to teach any strength of player'.

Positional Decision Making in Chess (Quality Chess) is a collaboration between Boris Gelfand and Jacob Aagaard. You might say that Gelfand is the brain and Aagaard is the hand in this enterprise! The ideas and the reasoning are Gelfand's – Aagaard has written up and structured the content, and in their interaction has ensured that all the right bits get explained. And not only the ones that a top-class player feels are worth explaining! It works extremely well and gives the book a spontaneous and informal feel, a little bit like those wonderful post-mortems that some of the top players give after they've played a great game.

While I was reading, I wondered which strength of player would benefit from studying it. In general, I always feel that if a book is brimful of quality, then any player should gain immensely from it. You do have to acknowledge though that there can always be elements of such a book that will be too advanced for players under a certain level.

The games are all explained from the viewpoint of one of the world's strongest players. In other words, in any given position, the annotator is seeing an awful lot more than us and he also has a much larger reserve of knowledge on which he can draw to help him assess a position. Gelfand's initial starting point when looking at positions is probably much higher than the level an average player could achieve after 30 minutes of intensive thought. From that point of view, you might feel that such a book could only be useful for the very strongest players.

However, despite all that skill and knowledge and preparation, playing chess practically remains a step into the unknown. There are numerous positions which even a player of Gelfand's strength cannot solve mathematically within a limited time. There are many situations in which decision-making cannot be done on the basis of concrete chess factors but also requires a measure of self-belief or judgment. Managing to take such decisions in a reasoned, confident manner – instead of blindly as a wild guess – is an important practical skill. Without it, two bad things can happen:

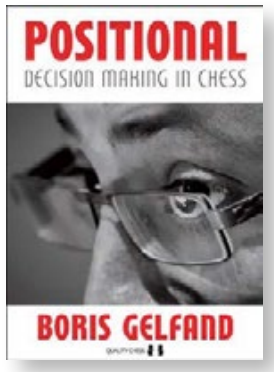
1. You end up getting stuck during games: you're unable to choose between possibilities based on current information and you're unable to increase your level of information due to the complexity of the position. Every additional variation you calculate merely brings extra confusion!

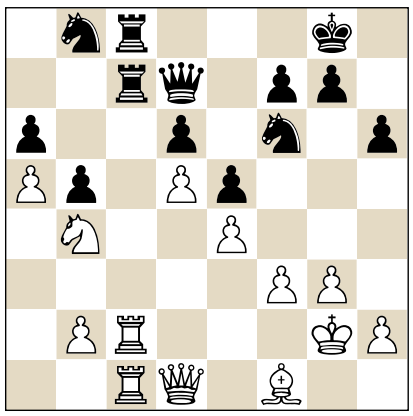
2. The uncertainty and doubt you experienced at that crucial moment, and the unsatisfactory way in which you finally took a decision, has a knock-on effect on your play in the rest of the game.

I think that this is a scenario that is familiar and relevant to players of all strengths. Herein lies the enormous strength of this book, and I think also the value of the collaboration between Gelfand and Aagaard. Gelfand is very good – and very honest – at explaining which decisions he could calculate and which decisions he needed to take on the basis of judgment, and how he did that. Aagaard is very good at prodding Gelfand about the things he found too obvious to mention, but which are not at all obvious to the rest of us! It adds up to the type of book I love: one in which a world-class player talks about his decision-making during a game, and tells you honestly about the ways in which he has applied his different skills during the different phases of a game. As long as you approach the book in this way, then I think this book has masses to teach any strength of player.

The best example of this is actually an example that Aagaard highlights in his short explanation of his role in the book. It arose in Gelfand's game against Campora in 2004.

Positional Decision Making in Chess
by Boris Gelfand
Quality Chess
2015
★★★★★





Gelfand-Campora
Izmir 2004
position after 24...♖ac7

Aagaard explains that 'Boris quickly and confidently made his next few moves, and would not have spent any time explaining them had he not asked him why he played as he played. The explanation was short, clean and crisp. It was also incredibly illuminating.'

25.♘d3 ♔f8 26.♖xc7

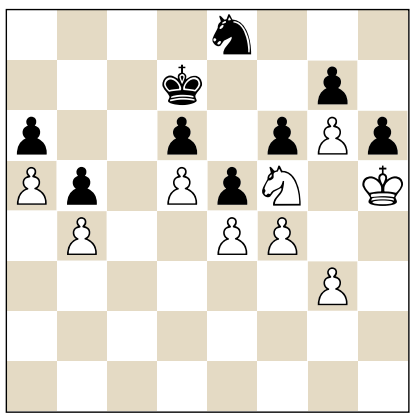
And now Gelfand's explanation: 'Apparently it is anything but obvious to some other grandmasters that White should exchange all the heavy artillery in this position, but I did not spend a lot of time on this decision at all. The danger of doing this is of course that Black could be able to set up a fortress and the heavy pieces would be needed to break it. Making such a decision at the board depends a lot on what you believe about the position. I was sure that I could break any attempt and therefore I went for it without too much hesitation. I should add that it is of course too far into the future to consider which type of fortress Black will try to set up. This is a moment to go with your feeling. I believed that White would win this ending and there were a lot of upsides to it. And I always play according to my beliefs. At the end of the day, it is not a matter of life and death; nor is it the right moment to try and find ultimate solutions.'

Here is the rest of the game in case you wonder if Gelfand was right.

26...♖xc7 27.♖xc7 ♕xc7 28.♕c1 ♕xc1 29.♘xc1 ♘fd7 30.♔f2 ♘c5 31.♔e3 ♔e7 32.b4 ♘cd7 33.♗h3 ♘f6 34.♘d3 ♘e8 35.f4 f6 36.♗c8 ♘c7 37.♔f3 ♔d8

'Aagaard is very good at prodding Gelfand about the things he found too obvious to mention, but which are not at all obvious to the rest of us!'

38.♗f5 ♘d7 39.h4 ♘f8 40.h5 ♘e8 41.♘f2 ♘c7 42.♘d1 ♘e8 43.♘e3 ♘c7 44.♗h3 ♘e8 45.♗f5 ♘c7 46.♗g6 ♘xg6 47.hxg6 ♘e8 48.♘f5 ♔d7 49.♔g4 ♔d8 50.♔h5 ♔d7



51.♘xg7 ♘xg7+ 52.♔xh6 f5 53.♔xg7 fxe4 54.♔f7 e3 55.g7 e2 56.g8♕ e1♕ 57.♕e8+ 1-0

Meet the Nimzo-Indian with 4.♕c2!
by Rustam Kasimdzhanov
ChessBase 2012
★★★☆☆

For me, it's all there in those comments! Two things in particular struck me:

1. Gelfand defines his choice as a matter of belief in himself and in the position.

2. Gelfand refuses to try to anticipate at this point all Black's possible defensive attempts. He has confidence in his ability to break any defensive structure that Black may put in his way.

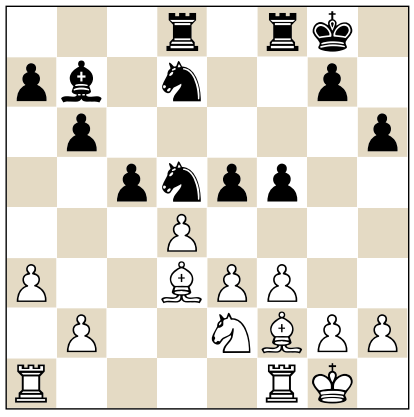
I know how often I've agonised about such decisions, trying to look deep into the future to give myself certainty about the ensuing ending. I'd often wondered whether that was the right way to do things, but you never know by yourself, do you? Reading about Gelfand's experiences gave me some additional confidence to trust my own judgment at crucial moments. It's a great book!

■ ■ ■

I've been having a good time in the evening the past month relaxing with a bottle of wine and some chess DVD's. Hmm… that sounds slightly sad come to think of it! Anyway, Kasimdzhanov, Marin and Ramirez have been pretty much constant companions. *Meet the Nimzo-Indian with 4.♕c2* by Rustam Kasimdzhanov (Chessbase DVD) is a fairly old DVD so I don't want to spend too much time on it. There were a couple of moments though where I was shocked out of my evening torpor and I just had to share them with someone! The first was when he is discussing the queenless middlegame that arises after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 b6 7.♗g5 ♗b7 8.f3 h6 9.♗h4 d5 10.e3

Sadler on Books

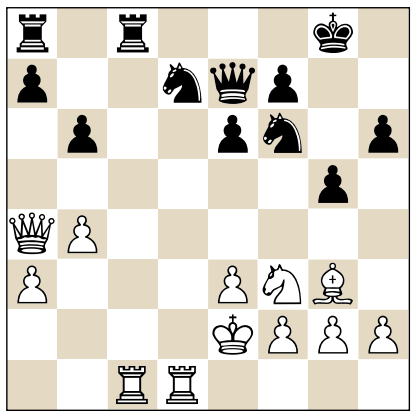
♘bd7 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.♗xd8 ♘xc3 13.♗h4 ♘d5 14.♗f2 f5 15.♗b5. In his game against Ghaem Maghami from Doha 2006, Kasimdzhanov discusses the following position:
15...c6 16.♗d3 c5 17.♘e2 ♖ad8 18.0-0 e5



'It's very important to observe how White uses the bishops. When having the bishops it is important not to open the position immediately, but to understand that the position is likely to open itself in the logical development of the game. White doesn't have to force any opening at the moment. For instance, 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 would only help Black to activate his pieces. The same goes for 19.dxc5 ♘xc5 and 19.e4 fxe4 20.fxe4 ♘f6. All these things would just help Black to get counterplay. So White is just activating his remaining pieces and giving Black the opportunity to open the centre. If Black would start liquidating with 19…cxd4 20.exd4 exd4 21.♘xd4, we see that White's pieces are coming into play, the White knight is threatening to come into e6 and f5 and Black would already be losing material.'

That is such a fantastic insight! The advantage of the two bishops is a long-term advantage, so White shouldn't hurry to open the position at the first opportunity. If you do, you run the risk of bringing Black's knights into such active squares that they counterbalance the bishops. Just waiting and letting the opponent do the hard work is a surefire way of guaranteeing that the balance of activity is completely in favour of the two bishops. You also see in the rest of the game that the side with the two bishops was able to withstand the maintenance of the central tension much better than the side without.
19.♖ad1 ♘e7 20.♘c3 ♔h8 21.♖fe1 a6 22.♗c2 g5 23.dxc5 ♘xc5 24.b4 ♘e6 25.♗b3 ♗c8 26.♘a4 b5 27.♘b6 ♘g7 28.♘xc8 ♘xc8 29.e4 fxe4 30.♗c5 exf3 31.♗xf8 ♖xf8 32.gxf3 ♘e7 33.♖xe5 ♘g6 34.♖d6 1-0

The other moment was quite funny. I've had the experience myself when recording and starting to explain something and then halfway through getting the feeling that something in your explanation is wrong. But you plough on regardless and hope no one notices!



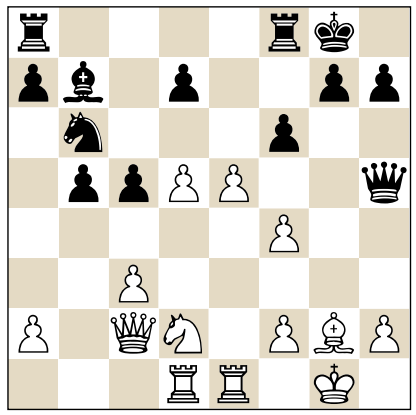
When discussing a position from the game Ivanchuk-Morozevich, Kasimdzhanov points out the weakness of the Black queenside and remarks: 'Black's pawns would be much safer if the pawns had been on b7 and a6, in accordance with the Capablanca rule where you have to place your pawns on squares opposite to the opponent's bishop where they are less vulnerable'. To be honest, this is one I always get very confused about but Capablanca's principle (expounded in *Chess Fundamentals*) is '*When the opponent has a bishop, keep your pawns on squares of the same colour as your opponent's bishop. Whenever you have a bishop, whether the opponent also has one or not, keep your pawns on squares of the opposite colour to that of your own bishop*'. I do like Kasimdzhanov's

Power Strategy 2
by Mihail Marin
ChessBase 2015
★★★★☆

DVD's a lot though: I'll happily take a few mistakes in return for the excellent insights!

■ ■ ■

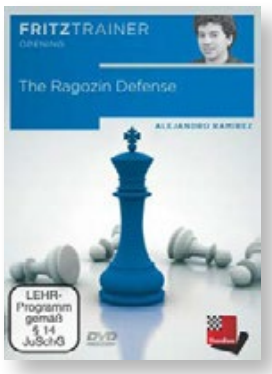
Mihail Marin's *Power Strategy 2 – The Middlegame – Static Positions* (Chessbase DVD) is another one that elicited a violent 'What??' reaction! It came during Marin's explanation of the game Drasko-Timoshenko, Tallinn 1989.



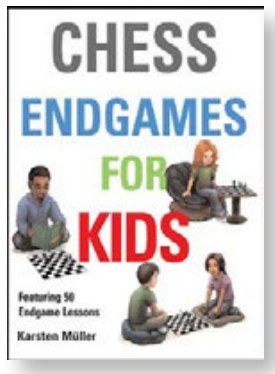
Drasko-Timoshenko
Tallinn 1989
position after 22...♘b6

Here Marin recommended the move 23.♘e4, which is fair enough. After 23...♗xd5, he recommended 24.♘xf6+ gxf6 25.♖xd5 ♘xd5 26.♗xd5+ ♔h8 27.♗xa8 ♖xa8 with a complicated position. After 23...♘xd5 he said 'Similar variations are possible. Actually White can start with 24.♖xd5 ♗xd5 25.♘xf6+, which is more or less the same thing'. Even with a few glasses of wine inside you, it takes a fraction of a second to spot that 23...♘xd5 loses to any number of moves: 24.♘d6, 24.♘xc5, 24.♕b3 and the list goes on. It's a strange oversight for a player of Marin's class.

The Ragozin Defense
by Alejandro Ramirez
ChessBase 2015
★★★★☆



Chess Endgames for Kids
by Karsten Müller
Gambit 2015
★★★★☆



By this stage I was getting a little bit worried because I had been having problems getting into the opening couple of games of the DVD. Somehow, I found it hard to get a grasp of which theme precisely Marin wanted to talk about and I found my attention wandering. Just in time however, Marin got into his stride and the next series of games were of the high quality we expect of him. I'm not at all familiar with the Karpov-Kortchnoi Baguio 1978 match, so it was very interesting to see some examples from this match, and his comments to the Karpov-Gligoric game, a fantastic Breyer System from the 1973 Leningrad Interzonal, were superb.

So what theme was Marin talking about during the Drasko-Timoshenko game? He called it the theme of playing with stable pieces – usually a knight – which are placed on a stable and well-protected square.

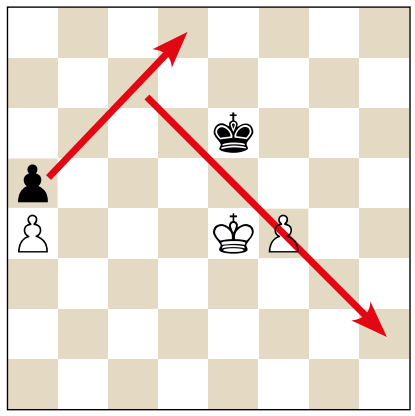
It was a theme which he associated with the Soviet Chess School. Marin's point was that both the knight on b6 and the bishop on b7 were very stable and placing big pressure on White's centre. When I watched the DVD, I was rather dubious about this particular example, to be honest – I don't know how impressed I really am with the power of Black's minor pieces – but that phrase 'stable pieces' has kept resonating in my mind. So much so that I've been using it again and again to find moves in analysis! So in conclusion, a slightly mixed experience though the best stuff is really very good!

■ ■ ■

The last DVD I watched was *The Ragozin Defence* by Alejandro Ramirez (Chessbase DVD). Absolutely nothing to criticize about this one. Ramirez does a super job of structuring the material and delivers it with enthusiasm and clarity. He's definitely one of the best DVD authors out there. The one downside is that the opening is pretty boring – this is a drawing repertory and no mistake! That aside, warmly recommended.

■ ■ ■

And finally, the last book to come through the post was *Chess Endgames for Kids* by Karsten Müller (Gambit). It's part of the Gambit Chess for Kids series and is a very nice summary of the basic starting knowledge you need to get through basic endgames. And as always in such cases, I learnt a few things I'd never heard of before! For example:



Hands up anyone who'd heard of Bähr's rule? It applies to positions where one side has a passed pawn on the d- to h-files, both kings are near to that passed pawn, and blocked a-pawns are on the board. There are two parts to the rule: **1.** If the attacker's rook's pawn has crossed the middle of the board, then the attacker wins. **2.** If not, draw a diagonal from the defender's pawn (a5) towards the 8th rank, and from the point of intersection with the c-file (c7) back towards the first rank (ends at h2). If the attacking passed pawn has *not* crossed this diagonal, then the attacker wins. So 1.♔d4 would win here, but 1.f5+ would draw. Which I would probably work out quicker than drawing the diagonals in my head, but still, a neat idea!

All in all, a good read which will be useful for both young kids and old kids like me! ■

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Hans Ree

Salvation through self-despair

When you think of it, it is remarkable how rarely chess players cry after losing a game. **HANS REE** could never do it, though he is aware of the healing powers of tears.

Among the cultural events that accompanied the recent Dutch championship was a short lecture by Marian Donner, a daughter of the late grandmaster Hein Donner. It was on the gender gap in chess, a subject on which Hein had vented his provocative opinions several times.

Marian briefly touched on Nigel Short's article in New In Chess, although it seemed to me that she had not read the canonical version in our magazine, only some reactions to it. I am not going to write about the gender gap, however, but about crying.

I was commentating on the games that day and, possibly as a friendly gesture to me, Marian quoted some lines that her father had written after losing a match against me in 1971: 'After I had resigned this game with perfect self-control and solemnly shook hands with my opponent in the best of Anglo-Saxon traditions, I rushed home, where I threw myself onto the bed, howling and screaming, and pulled the blankets over my face. For three days and three nights the Erinyes were after me. Then I got up, dressed, kissed my wife and considered my situation.' (*The King*, translation by Richard de Weger)

My wife, who was present at the championship during Marian's lecture, said: 'That's strange. Paul van der Sterren has also written that he cried after a loss against you. Was it so terrible, then, to lose against you?' Indeed, Paul's description in his Dutch chess autobiography *Zwart op wit* of his distress after a loss against me in 1984 was even more dramatic than Donner's: 'I cried, something that – as far as I can remember – I have never been able to do or needed to do at any other disaster in my chess life. But the sorrow that assails me, about my defeat, about the futility of my efforts, about what I had done to my beloved Queen's Gambit, about my career that got stuck, about everything and everything and everything... it flowed out like a waterfall.'

Paul cried like a waterfall, Hein howled and screamed. I don't believe that Hein's howling and screaming and staying in bed for three days really happened and I don't even think that he intended his readers to believe it. But I do believe Paul. There is nothing tongue-in-cheek about his description, nor is there elsewhere in his book. Besides the differences, there is also a similarity in the two accounts. The emotional outburst takes place later, at home.

Transformation through tears

Paul's description is so dramatic that it comes close to religious despair, which is often followed by a sense of being re-born. The American psychologist and philosopher William James used the expression 'salvation through self-despair' in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. 'Something must give way, a native hardness must break down and liquefy', he wrote. Such a momentous experience cannot occur every day. I think it is significant that Paul cried over chess only once.

I have often recommended this great book by William James to friends, who invariably either laughed heartily or quickly changed the subject away from religion in embarrassment.

Although crying is sometimes seen as unmanly, it has been more common to extol the healing powers of crying. 'I wept not, so to stone within I grew', says a character in Dante's *Divina Comedia*.

'Tears shed over movies contain 25 per cent more protein than tears shed over onions.' This tidbit of Internet information reminds us that there are many ways of crying, and also that a scientific physiological classification of tears is difficult. It is easy to

imagine researchers collecting tears shed over onions, but how did they do it in the cinema? Sitting next to a research subject with a pipette and waiting for emotional moments in the film seems quite a disturbance of the normal crying process.

I was told that at one of the super-tournaments in Tilburg in the 1980's or early 1990's, Vassily Ivanchuk cried for a long time in the woods of Oisterwijk, near the players' bungalows, after a loss. Crying in the sense of howling to the trees and to the sky, not in the sense of shedding tears.

Later Ivanchuk said that it hadn't helped him and that he wouldn't do it again. For him the catharsis theory of Freud had failed, but we should note that he had howled and raged and not shed tears. He had not liquefied his inner hardness.

Deliberately shedding tears is more difficult than howling, but not impossible. Little children peek at their parents to decide if they will cry or not. And later in life, strategic crying in a marriage is a common phenomenon.

Maybe werewolves should not howl but cry, to let their softer nature blossom and to become fully human. Priests perhaps, no longer red in tooth and claw, but only symbolically offering the body of Christ to be eaten during Mass.

Stendhal syndrome

Frank Brady writes in his biography *Endgame* that Bobby Fischer, as a seven-year-old boy, cried after losing in a simul in New York given by Max Pavey. And then again later, when he was 12, after losing a tournament game. At least that was what his vanquisher Harry Fajans said. According to Brady, Bobby was highly indignant when questioned about the latter incident and vehemently denied it. It doesn't mean much. A boy cries (or not) after losing a game; no big deal.

It has been written that Fischer, after his loss against Spassky in Mar del Plata in 1960, had tears in his eyes, which must have been difficult to check. Anyway, this tale is usually followed by the anecdote that, later in that tournament, David Bronstein came up to him and said: 'Why are you crying because of one game? They forced me to lose a match for the world championship to Botvinnik and I didn't cry!'

Kasparov, in *My Great Predecessors II*, attributes the story about Bronstein to the boss of the Linares tournaments Luis Rentero, a very unreliable source, and adds that Bronstein himself asserted that he had never told Fischer any such thing.

> 'Paul cried like a waterfall, Hein howled and screamed.'

Connected with the match between Botvinnik and Bronstein there is a story about crying that is really moving. It was first told by Genna Sosonko in New In Chess in 2002, in his article about Salo Flohr, 'Essig Fleisch'.

In the 23rd game, which Botvinnik had to win to save his title, he had sealed a move at the adjournment. Flohr, his long-time good friend, started analysing the consequences, first just in his mind, then at Botvinnik's place and later that night at his own place for a final polishing of the variations.

The next morning he was at Botvinnik's again. After lunch they went to the playing hall, and before climbing up onto the stage, Botvinnik quietly admitted that actually he had sealed a different move. Sosonko wrote: 'Tears welled up in Flohr's eyes, and for a long time he was unable to forget the resentment that he felt towards his suspicious and mistrustful old friend Misha.' This was real grief, incomparable to that after losing a game.

By the way, Brady does not mention Fischer crying after his game against Spassky. However, Brady had cried himself when he had asked Bobby about his preparation before the tournament and Bobby had overwhelmed him with a flood of variations that went way over his head. He writes: 'I began to weep quietly, aware that in that time-suspended moment I was in the presence of genius.' This is known as the Stendhal syndrome. People faint in the presence of overwhelming beauty.

Silly tears

But what about myself? Like almost everybody I have cried on many occasions; at school, in marriages – though not strategically, I think – and after my father's death, but as far as I can remember never about chess. Like many older people, I find myself with teary eyes over films. Never over real masterpieces, when I sit transfixed. No, only over well-made sentimental films, such as the recent chess film *The Dark Horse.* And then, always, it's never at sad moments that my eyes get wet, but at the happy ending, in this case when the great chess coach (who actually doesn't know the difference between the Spanish and the Italian game and has a star pupil who wins a New Zealand championship by starting his game as White with 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘xe5 ♘xe5 5.d4 ♘xc4) saves his young nephew from a criminal future.

Silly cinema tears. Tears can do better than that. My impossible wish is that some day I will be able to get so involved in a chess game that I will cry after losing it, although it's a bit late in life for that. ■

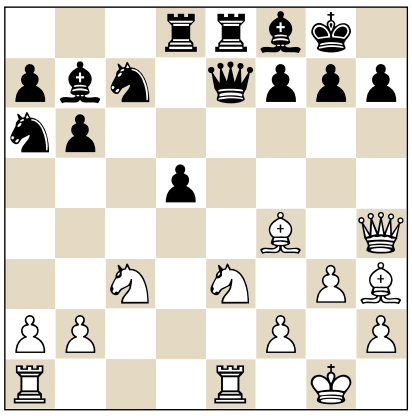
Jan Timman

Danish Delight

The 2015 Politiken Cup ended in a massive 10-way tie for first, with Austrian GM Markus Ragger taking the title on tiebreak. **JAN TIMMAN** looks at the key games and presents highlights from his lecture on endgame studies.

The Politiken Cup in Helsingør had attracted a record number of participants this year: 431 of them lined up, 120 up on last year, which caused the organizers some headaches. Where to put the 60 extra boards? There are Open tournaments with fewer participants than Helsingør's excess. But a solution was available. Traditionally, the Politiken Cup is played in the gigantic Konventum conference centre, where other sporting events usually take place as well. This year, however, the entire focus was on chess, so another building in the complex, the E-Wing, could be used as an additional playing hall. With such a large field, it was to be expected that the group of high scorers would also be bigger, but it still came as a surprise that no fewer than 10 players ended up topping the board with 8 out of 10.

The first three rounds tend to be relatively plain sailing for the grandmasters, but that doesn't necessarily mean that their games are always beds of roses.



Nisipeanu-Sigeman
Helsingør 2015 (2)
position after 19...♕e7

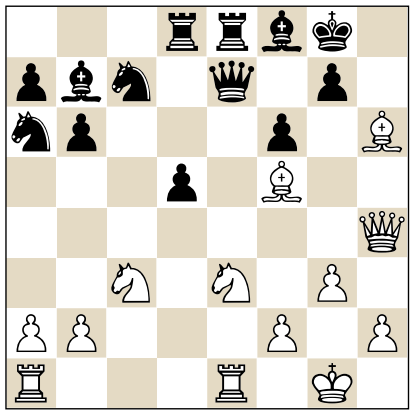
The black player is Johan Sigeman, name-giver and sponsor of the Malmö tournament that has unfortunately fallen by the wayside. He has gone for an excellent set-up, and objectively speaking, White's best choice is to go for an unfavourable endgame. But Nisipeanu makes a last-ditch attempt to confound his opponent.

20.♗g5

Forcing Black to advance his f-pawn.

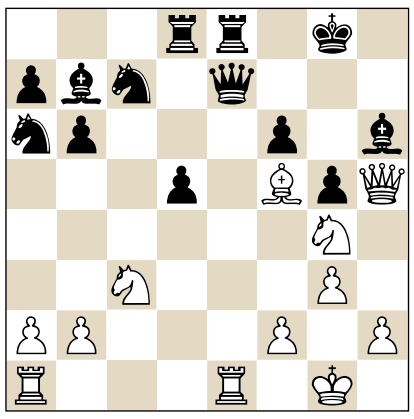
20...f6 21.♗f5 h6 22.♗xh6

There's no way back now. White must sacrifice his bishop.



22...g5 With very little time left on his clock, Sigeman thought better of capturing the bishop, even though he could safely have done so. After 22...gxh6 23.♘g4 ♕xe1+ 24.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 25.♔g2 both 25...♘e8 and 25...♖d6 are sufficient to see off the white attack.

23.♕h5 ♗xh6 24.♘g4!



Now White is winning. Still, he has to keep playing accurately.

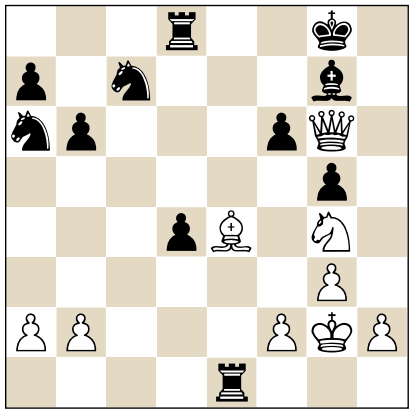
24...♕xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 26.♔g2 d4+ 27.♘e4?

Who wouldn't play this? The attacked knight is moved to a square where it will be covered. Yet this is how White lets the win slip through his fingers. He should have gone 27.f3!. You will soon see why.

27...♗g7 28.♕g6

There is no convincing continuation of the attack. After 28.♕h7+ ♔f8 29.♘h6 Black has the resource 29...♗d5!, and wins. This is why White should have played 27.f3 – it was essential for the queen's knight to continue to control square d5.

28...♗xe4+ 29.♗xe4

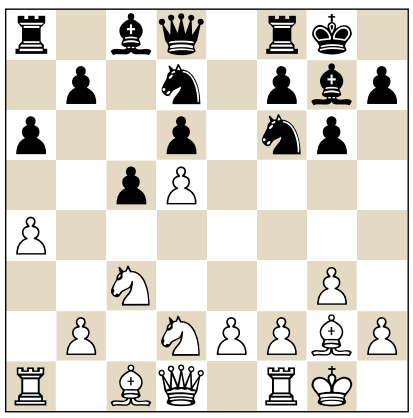


29...♖xe4?

And now White gets away with it after all. After the cool-headed 29...♔f8! 30.♘xf6 ♘c5, White would have had nothing more than perpetual check, starting with 31.♘h7+.

30.♘xf6+ ♔f8 31.♘xe4 d3 32.♘xg5 ♖d7 33.♘h7+ ♔e7 34.♕xg7+ ♔d8 35.♕f8+ ♘e8 36.♘f6 Black resigned.

In Round 2, another seasoned grandmaster might have found himself in deep water.



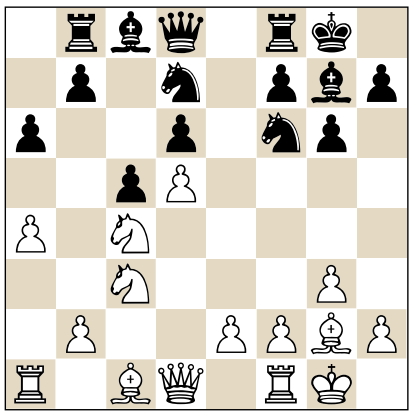
Brorsen-Brunello
Helsingør 2015 (2)
position after 11.a4

A well-known theoretical position. The main line continues 11...♖e8 12.h3 ♖b8 13.♘c4, and now Black can choose between 13...♘e5 and 13...♘b6. The latter move is possible because after 14.♘xd6? ♕xd6 15.♗f4 Black can defend with 15...♖e5. But Brunello played:

11...♖b8

This is inaccurate.

12.♘c4



12...♘b6?

And this is an out-and-out blunder, since White can now capture on d6 with devastating effect. Brorsen must have overlooked this. He withdrew his knight to a3 and went on to lose. Unbelievably enough, the blunder 12...♘b6? has already occurred 51 times in chess practice. In 21 cases, White did not capture on d6. All 30 games in which he did ended in victory for White. After 13.♘xd6 the situation is indeed utterly hopeless for Black. Brunello is the strongest-but-one player to make this blunder. It also happened to Beliavsky 12 years ago, also in the Politiken Cup, which was still held in Copenhagen then. His opponent, Johannessen, withdrew his knight and lost.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Now that the Sigeman Tournament belongs to the past, the Politiken Cup in Helsingør is an excellent occasion for old friends Johan Sigeman and Jan Timman to catch up.

The first surprise came in Round 4. Tournament favourite Fressinet, the only 2700+ player, lost to the 17-year-old German player Jan-Christian Schröder.

RL 12.1 – C84
Jan-Christian Schröder
Laurent Fressinet
Helsingør 2015 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7

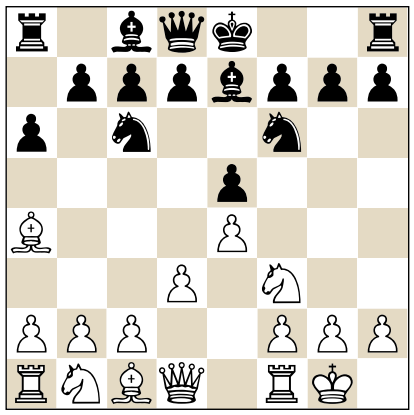
The closed Ruy Lopez is not the ideal way to play for a win, since it grants White a space advantage.

6.d3

Anand's choice against Carlsen in Stavanger. The move with the d-pawn is starting to gain popularity. It seems pretty unambitious, since White wants to advance his pawn to d4 later any-

Jan Timman

way, but practice has shown that White usually ends up with the same position as in the main line, but with the advantage of having avoided the Open Ruy Lopez and the Marshall Attack.



6...d6 7.c3 0-0 8.♖e1 ♖e8 9.♘bd2 ♗f8 10.♘f1 h6 11.♘g3 b5 12.♗b3 ♘a5 13.♗c2 c5 14.d4 ♕c7 15.h3 ♗d7 16.d5 c4

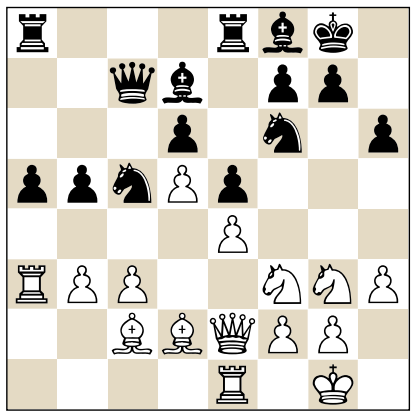
Helsingør 2015

1	Markus Ragger	AUT	2688	8
2	Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	GER	2654	8
3	Jon Ludvig Hammer	NOR	2677	8
4	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2707	8
5	Tiger Hillarp Persson	SWE	2563	8
6	Samuel Shankland	USA	2656	8
7	Sebastien Mazé	FRA	2575	8
8	Mihail Marin	ROU	2579	8
9	Sune Berg Hansen	DEN	2571	8
10	Vitaly Kunin	GER	2576	8
11	Jan-Christian Schröder	GER	2461	7½
12	Aleksandr Rakhmanov	RUS	2626	7½
13	Daniel Naroditsky	USA	2622	7½
14	Jan Timman	NED	2566	7½
15	Sergey Grigoriants	RUS	2594	7½
16	Jacob Aagaard	DEN	2506	7½
17	Jonny Hector	SWE	2485	7½
18	Daniel Howard Fernandez	ENG	2472	7½
19	Gawain Jones	ENG	2647	7½
20	Axel Delorme	FRA	2484	7
21	Lars Schandorff	DEN	2520	7
22	Jakob Vang Glud	DEN	2531	7
23	Sabino Brunello	ITA	2539	7
24	Axel Smith	SWE	2449	7
25	Carsten Hoi	DEN	2383	7
26	Christian Jepson	SWE	2428	7
27	Eivind Olav Risting	NOR	2190	7
28	Dmitrij Kollars	GER	2437	7
29	Pontus Sjodahl	SWE	2425	7
30	James Tarjan	USA	2490	7

431 players, 10 rounds

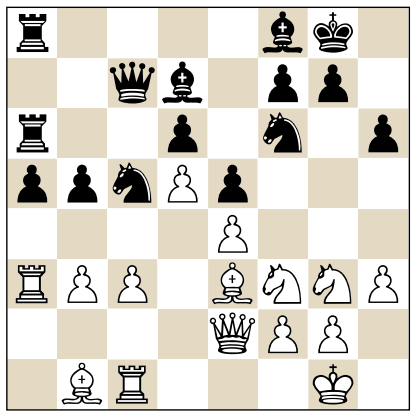
17.b4 cxb3 18.axb3 ♘b7 19.♗d2 ♘c5 20.♖a3 a5 21.♕e2

After some accurate play White can boast a slight advantage.



21...♖a6 Inaccurate. Stronger was 21...♕b7, or 21...a4 22.b4 ♘b3 23.♗xb3 axb3 24.♖xb3 ♖a2, with compensation for the pawn.

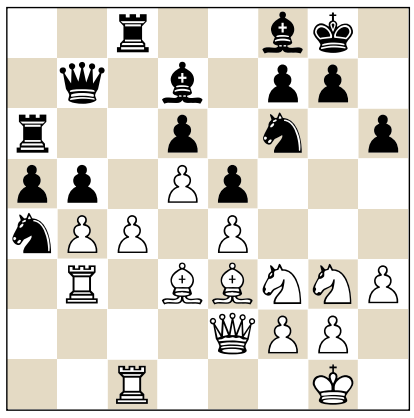
22.♖c1 ♕b7 23.♗e3 ♕c7 24.♗b1 ♖ea8



25.b4!

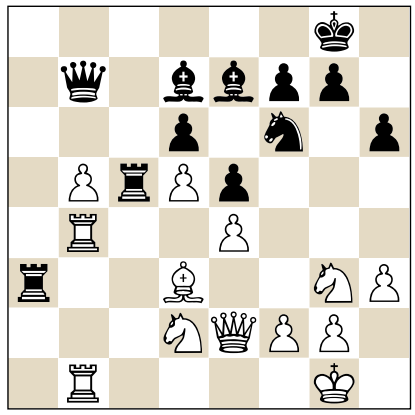
Classical and strong. The black pawns will get extremely weak now.

25...♘a4 26.♗d3 ♕b7 27.♖b3 ♖c8 28.c4



Again good timing. Black is in serious trouble.

28...axb4 29.♖xb4 ♘c5 30.♗xc5 ♖xc5 31.♖cb1 ♖a3 32.♘d2 ♗e7 33.cxb5



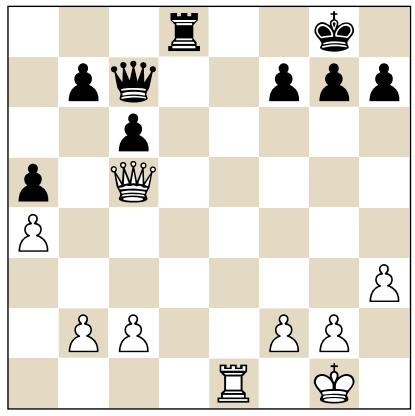
33...♖a2 His only hope here was 33...♖cc3. **34.♗c4**

Forcing the rook back, after which the b-pawn has a clear run.

34...♖a3 35.b6 ♖ca5 36.♗b5 ♗xb5 37.♖xb5 g6 38.♕c4 ♖xb5 39.♕xb5 ♖c3 40.♘c4 ♕d7 41.b7 ♖c1+ 42.♔h2

Black resigned.

Schröder generally made an excellent impression with his solid positional play. In Helsingør he scored his second grandmaster result, only losing against Shankland because of a blunder in a drawn endgame. An interesting moment occurred in his game against me in Round 5.



Timman-Schröder
Helsingør 2015 (5)
position after 30...♖d8

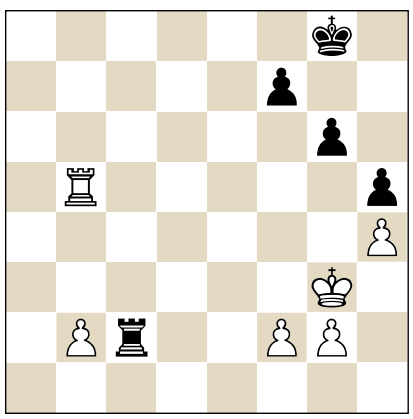
White is better, but he must hurry to prevent Black from consolidating. It goes without saying that I wanted to take my rook to e7, but White first has to create some extra luft for his king. I looked at 31.g3, but then Black will save his skin with 31...b6 32.♖e7

♕xg3+!, and the rook ending offers no prospects. So I tried something else.

31.♕e7

There is nothing against withdrawing the black queen to c8, but Schröder decides to go for the rook ending.

31...♕xe7 32.♖xe7 b5 33.♖a7 g6 34.axb5 cxb5 35.♖xa5 ♖d1+ 36.♔h2 ♖d2 37.♖xb5 ♖xc2 38.♔g3 h5 39.h4

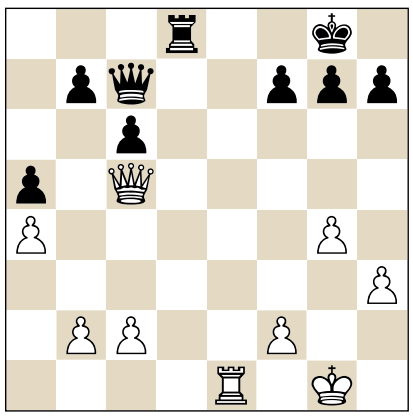


I was fairly optimistic here. If White succeeds in getting his king to e3, he will have reasonable winning chances.

39...♖c4!

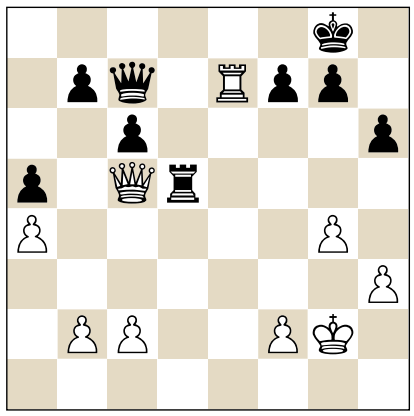
Black had only a few minutes left for his final two moves, so it's all the more admirable that he managed to find this accurate defence. Now the white king is tied to the defence of the h-pawn, and despite my best efforts, I failed to create any realistic winning chances.

Back to the first diagram position. The computer indicates 31.g4!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

as the first move, but I must confess that I hadn't even considered this. The older generation: you don't look at moves that seem weakening and anti-positional. But Black will be unable to exploit this. The main point is that 31...b6 32.♖e7 ♕g3+ 33.fxg3 bxc5 34.♖e5! leads to a winning rook ending. Black has only one hidden defence after 31.g4, to wit 31...h6 32.♖e7 ♖d1+! 33.♔g2 ♖d5!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

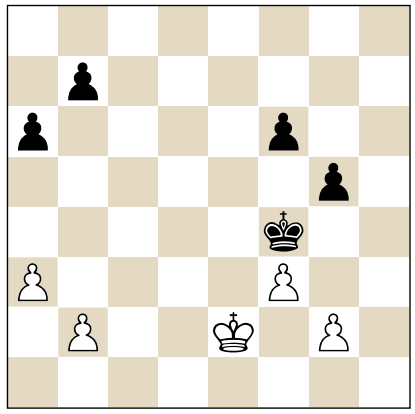
and now the queen ending 34.♕xd5 ♕xe7 35.♕xa5 ♕e4+ won't yield anything.

34.♕e3 ♖d7 35.♖e8+ ♔h7 36.♖e5 is the only way for White to maintain the pressure on the black position.

In that same round, an interesting pawn ending arose.

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Trusting his Buchholz score, Markus Ragger took no risks in the final rounds. Three draws indeed proved enough for the Austrian GM to win the 2015 Politiken Cup.



Hillarp Persson-Ragger
Helsingør 2015 (5)
position after 39.♔xe2

Black is clearly better.

39...♔g3

Forcing the white king on the back foot. There are similarities with the famous endgame Cohn-Rubinstein, St. Petersburg 1909.

40.♔f1 b5

The best continuation. Now White will have to play very accurately.

41.b4!

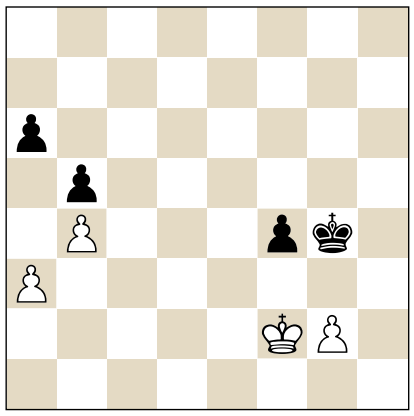
After other moves Black would have played 41...a5, and White would soon have run out of tempos.

41...f5 42.♔g1 g4 43.fxg4 ♔xg4

The only possible winning attempt.

44.♔f2 f4

Jan Timman



And here White resigned, even though he had no fewer than three moves to make a draw: 45.♔e2, 45.♔e1 and 45.♔g1, the point being that after 45.♔e2 ♔g3 46.♔f1 f3 47.gxf3 ♔xf3 48.♔e1 ♔e3 White can save himself with 49.a4.

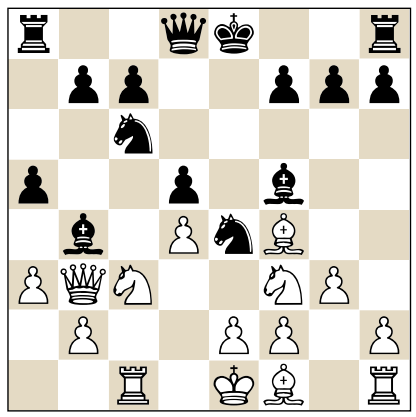
Remarkably enough, Ragger was not surprised by Tiger's resignation – he also thought that Black was winning. And they are not the only ones who have made this mistake. The endgame, you see, is a well-known theoretical position. In their book *Pawn Endings*, Averbakh and Maizelis analyse a sideline from Cohn-Rubinstein in which they overlook the saving move with the white a-pawn. Jonathan Speelman pointed this out in his 1981 book *Analysing the Endgame*, writing that Jonathan Mestel had discovered this resource. Surprisingly enough, this endgame only occurred once more in practice, with reversed colours in Nestorovic-Brkic, Sarajevo 2013. Brkic did find the way to the draw.

Ilya Smirin started with 6 out of 6, an excellent prospect for a high score. But it wasn't to be. Smirin then lost three games on the trot, starting against Hammer. Round 7 turned out to be decisive for the final result. Nisipeanu beat Rakhmanov, while I went under against Ragger, so now there were three leaders on 6½ points: Ragger, Nisipeanu and Hammer, in Buchholz order. This did not change in the remaining three rounds. All three leaders drew their games, with Ragger going to the least trouble to try and score another win. He had been playing against strong grandmasters from Round 5 on, and after that nothing can go wrong anymore Buchholz-wise. Hammer, however, did his best, and afterwards tweeted: 'Disgusted with my last two White games. A win would have meant first prize, but I was much closer to losing than getting any kind of edge.'

Earlier in the tournament he had won a game that yielded him the prize for best game. I show the game without any comments. Hammer played very strongly, but the finale was more of an execution than an attractive combination.

NI 27.2 – D38
Jakob Vang Glud
Jon Ludvig Hammer
Helsingør 2015 (6)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗f4 ♘e4 7.♖c1 ♘c6 8.g3 ♗f5 9.♕b3 a5 10.a3



10...a4 11.♕a2 ♗xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘a5 13.♘d2 ♘xd2 14.♗xd2 ♘b3 15.♖d1 0-0 16.♗g2 ♖e8 17.♗f4

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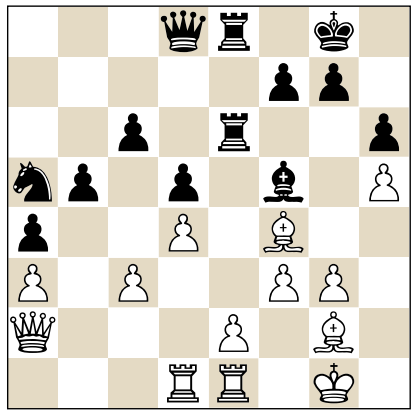
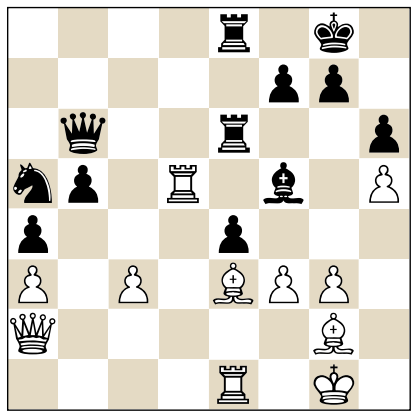
CALLE ERLANDSSON

Jon Ludvig Hammer kept on fighting till the end, but the Norwegian was 'disgusted' with his last two White games.

♖a6 18.0-0 ♖ae6 19.♖fe1 b5 20.f3 c6 21.h4 h6 22.h5 ♘a5

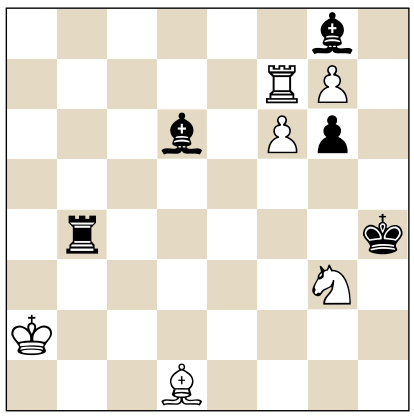


23.e4 dxe4 24.d5 cxd5 25.♖xd5 ♕b6+ 26.♗e3



26...exf3 27.♗xb6 ♖xe1+ 28.♔f2 fxg2 29.♔xg2 ♗b1 30.♕d2 ♘b3
White resigned.

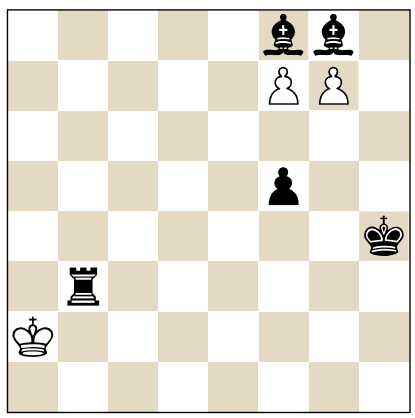
In the evening of the fifth round I gave a very well-attended lecture about endgame studies. I started by showing three endgame studies by Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen, the Danish study composer who won first prize in the study tournament in honour of my 60th birthday. Since the definitive version of his study has not yet been published in New In Chess, I will use this occasion to remedy this.



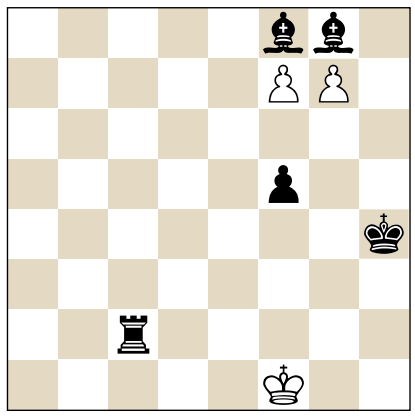
Slumstrup Nielsen 2013
White to play and draw

The white rook is finding itself in an annoying pin.
1.♗b3!
A bishop sacrifice to block the diagonal.

1...♖xb3 2.♖f8! ♗xf8
After 2...♖b8+ 3.f7! ♗xf7+ 4.♖xf7 ♔xg3 5.♖f6 g5 6.♖g6! White will win the g-pawn.
3.♘f5+! There's no end to the sacrifices. The knight sac is for closing the f-file. In another six moves we'll see why.
3...gxf5 4.f7!



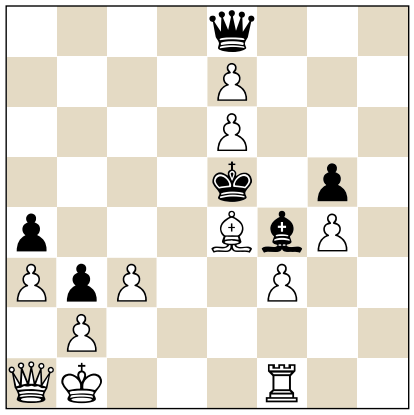
The fantastic starting position has arisen and Black will start chasing the white king.
4...♖a3+ 5.♔b1 ♖a1+ 6.♔c2 ♖c1+ 7.♔d3 ♖c3+ 8.♔e2 ♖c2+ 9.♔f1



Now we see the point of the knight sac. Without the black f-pawn 9...♖f2+ would have been winning.
9...♖c1+ 10.♔e2 ♖e1+ 11.♔d3 ♖e3+ This time the rook check comes from the other side.
12.♔c2 ♖e2+ 13.♔b1 ♖b2+ 14.♔a1!
The king is safe in the corner.
14...♖a2+ 15.♔b1 And the king has travelled the entire circuit.

After this I showed my own recent studies. The audience appreciated one of them so much that they broke out in spontaneous applause.

Jan Timman



Timman 2015
White to play and win
(after Simkhovitch)
First publication

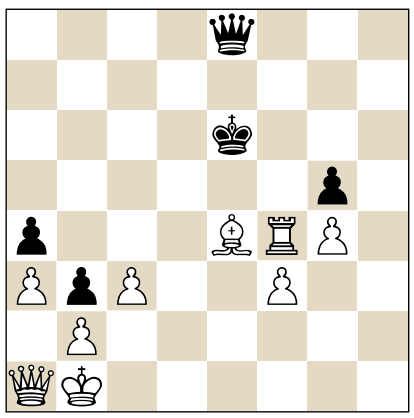
The study is based on a concept of the Russian study composer From Simkhovitch, who lived from 1896 to 1945. The win is hard to realize, because the white queen is cut off. White will have to eliminate either the black bishop or the black queenside pawns.

1.♖d1! ♔**f6** The best defence. After 1...♕xe7 2.♖d4 ♕e8 3.♗h7! White has blocked the h-file for the black queen for the moment, which gives him time to capture on f4. 1...♗e3 2.♗c2! ♕xe7 3.♖d3 ♔f4 4.c4! won't help Black either, since White will then take on b3.

2.♖d7 ♕**h8** The alternative 2...♔xe6 loses after 3.♖b7 ♕h8 4.e8♕+! ♕xe8 5.♖b6+ ♔e5 6.♗c2! ♕g8 7.♖b4, and White has time to eliminate the black pawns.

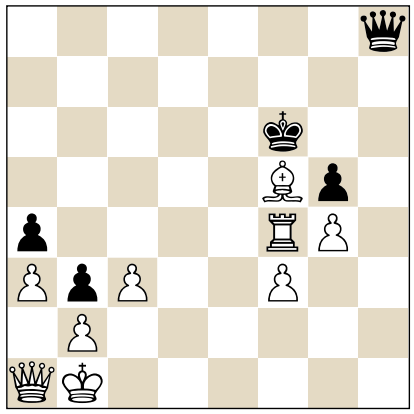
3.e8♘+! An elegant way to force the queen back.

3...♕xe8 4.♖f7+ ♔xe6 5.♖xf4



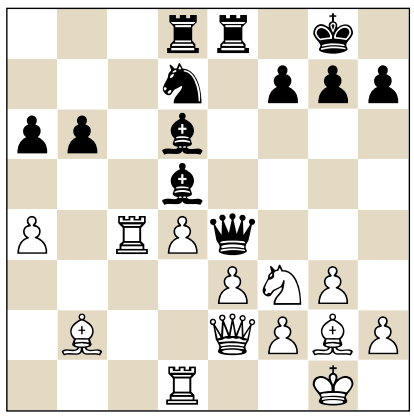
If Black captures the rook, the white king will escape, closely followed by the queen.

5...♕h8 What now? **6.♗f5+** If the black king goes to the d-file or the e-file, the white rook will be able to return to the first rank. **6...♔f6**



Now comes the denouement – Simkhovitch's concept. **7.♔c1! ♕h1+ 8.♔d2 ♕xa1** The queen has changed colours. **9.♗b1+!** Shutting in the queen. **9...gxf4 10.♔c1** And the white passed pawns decide.

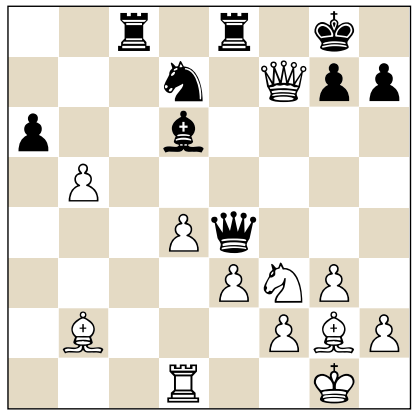
One of the participants was the American grandmaster Jim Tarjan. I had seen him last in Indonesia in December 1983. A year later, Tarjan had regretfully said goodbye to professional chess. After trying and failing to make a comfortable living with it he decided to become a librarian instead. Now he is retired and able to devote himself to his old love again. After Gibraltar, Helsingør was his second Open tournament on European soil this year, and he would have been amongst the big throng of winners if only he had been tactically more alert in the final round.



S.B.Hansen-Tarjan
Helsingør 2015 (10)
position after 21.♗g2

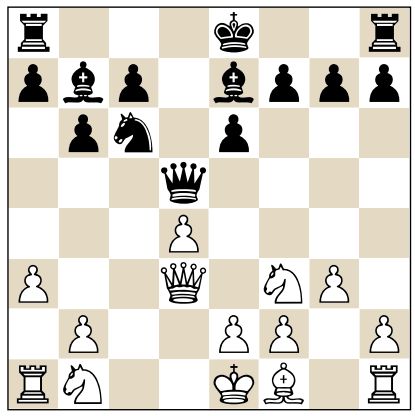
Tarjan thoughtlessly captured the rook, and after:

21...♗xc4 22.♕xc4 b5 23.axb5 ♖c8 24.♕xf7+!



White won easily.

With 21...♘e5!! Black could have made the game his. When I saw this, I immediately thought back to a game of mine against Judit Polgar.



Timman-Polgar
Malmö 2000
position after 11...♕xd5

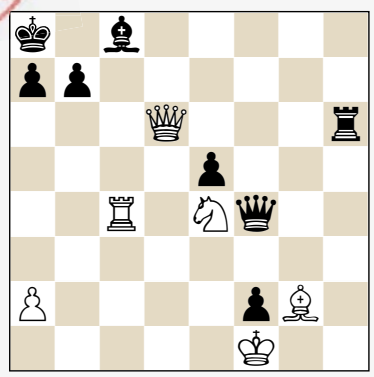
I had prepared this, and was planning to continue 12.♘c3, as in Epishin-Razuvaev, St.Petersburg 1998, where White was slightly better after 12...♕h5 13.♗g2. But after a long think I decided to go for:

12.e4

I was heavily criticised for this move: didn't I understand that advancing the e-pawn was anti-positional? It goes without saying that I was thoroughly aware of that, but I had been unable to find anything else, because after 12.♘c3 Black has the fantastic 12...♘e5!!, with a large advantage. Epishin and Razuvaev had not seen it, but I was pretty sure that Judit would not overlook such a tactical hammerblow. ■

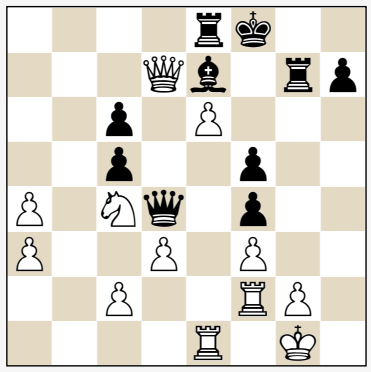
Solutions

from page 71



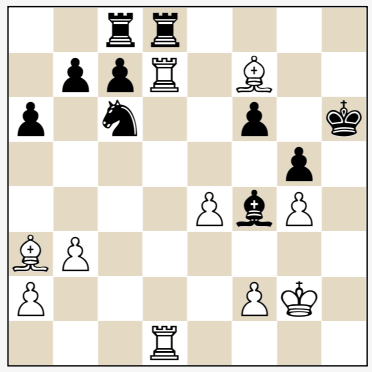
1. Nestorovic-Atalik
Veliko Gradiste 2015

The black rook can't take the enemy queen. Instead, it finds another target: **45...♖h1+! 46.♗xh1 ♗h3+** White resigned.



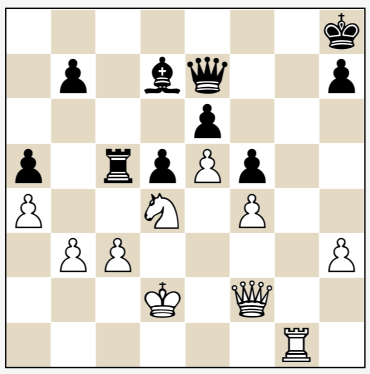
2. Sidorenko-Birnboim
Israel 2015

28...♕xf2+! And White resigned in view of 29.♔xf2 ♗h4+ 30.♔g1 ♖xd7 31.exd7 ♖xe1+ 32.♔h2 ♗g3+ 33.♔h3 ♖h1 mate.



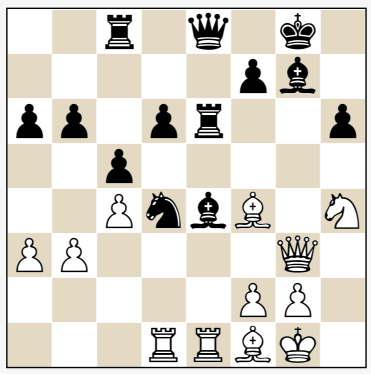
3. Mamedov-Koksal
Nakhchivan 2015

41.♗f8+! Making the following discovered check more effective. **41...♖xf8 42.♖h1+ ♔g7 43.♗e6+** If 43...♔g6 44.♗f5 mate. Black resigned.



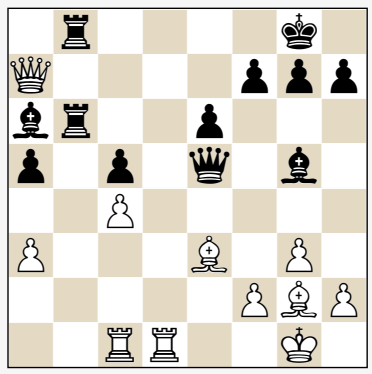
4. Kupreichik-Pushkov
Eretria 2015

33.♘xf5! exf5 34.e6 Mate is threatening, the rook and the bishop are attacked. Too much to bear. Black resigned.



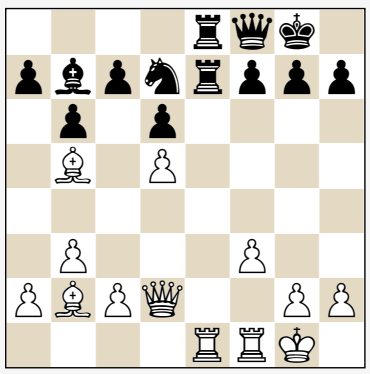
5. Ezat-Shoker
Cairo 2015

'Double Petrosian, please!' Two consecutive exchange sacs: **29.♖xd4! cxd4 30.♖xe4! ♔h8** 30...♖xe4 31.♘f5 ♕f8 32.♗xd6 or 32.♗xh6. **31.♘f5** and Black resigned after move 40.



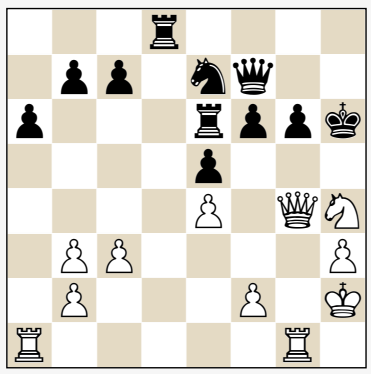
6. Cordova-Hevia
Havana 2015

The vital square d8 is protected twice. Nothing to worry about? **28.♗f4! ♗xf4 29.♕xb6!** Black resigned.



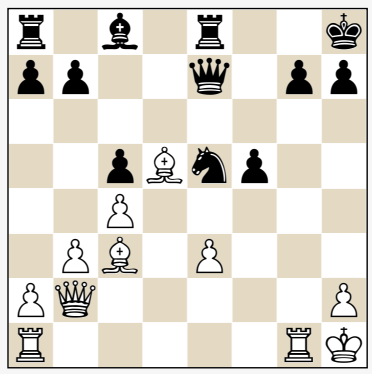
7. Dubov-Landa
Sochi 2015

19.♗xd7 ♖xd7 20.♗xg7! ♔xg7 and here the clever ricochet **21.♕d4+!** instead of the standard 21.♕g5+? ♔h8, which gives merely a draw. **21...f6 22.♕g4+ ♔h6 23.♕xd7** and Black soon resigned.



8. Socko-Brunello
Italia 2015

30.♘f5+! gxf5 30...♔h7 31.♕h4+ ♔g8 32.♘h6+. **31.exf5 ♖c6** 31...♘xf5 32.♕xf5 and White's attack is decisive. **32.♖a4! ♖d2** Or 32...♖g8 33.♕xg8! ♘xg8 34.♖h4+ ♕h5 35.♖g6+ ♔h7 36.♖xh5+. **33.♕g7+!** Mating after 33...♕xg7 34.♖h4 mate.



9. Fedoseev-Popov
Sochi 2015

21.♖xg7! ♔xg7 21...♕xg7 fails to 22.♖g1 ♕f6 23.♗xe5 ♕xe5 24.♕xe5+ ♖xe5 25.♖g8 mate. **22.♖g1+ ♔h6 23.♗xe5! ♕xe5 24.♕f2!** Black resigned, as he has to give up his queen to avoid checkmate. Not 24.♕g2? f4! 25.exf4 ♕e7 26.♗f7! ♗g4! 27.♗xe8 ♖xe8 28.♕xg4 ♕e4+ with a draw.

Radoslaw Wojtaszek

CURRENT ELO: 2733
DATE OF BIRTH: January 13, 1987
PLACE OF BIRTH: Elblag, Poland
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Warsaw, Poland

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Indian, but also Italian, especially pizza quattro formaggi with extra salami!

And what drink?
Coca-Cola Zero. Also a dry white wine from time to time.

Who is your favourite author?
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle but Nigel's articles here are also interesting to read ☺.

What was the best book you ever read?
Open, the autobiography of Andre Agassi.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Braveheart with Mel Gibson, but *Inception* and *Inglourious Basterds* come close.

What is your favourite TV series?
How I Met Your Mother and the first three seasons of *Family Guy*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Leonardo Di Caprio, if one can forget that he played in *Titanic*.

And a favourite actress?
Scarlett Johansson.

What music do you like to listen to?
Rock, pop, sometimes even Polish hip hop!

Do you have a favourite painter?
I'm not really into art, but I always thought that Salvador Dali's work was cool.

What is your best result ever?
The silver medal in the 2011 European Championship was nice, but by the quality of the games probably Biel 2015.

What was your best game ever?
Navara-Wojtaszek, 1-0, Biel 2015. As Daniel Fridman told me after the game: 'I felt sorry that you had to play and couldn't just sit and enjoy as a spectator!'

Who is your favourite chess player?
Vishy Anand. Funnily enough, he was my role-model in my childhood, which makes the fact that I was able to work with him for so many years even more special for me.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Getting a floppy disk with Fritz 2 influenced me more than any book I've ever read.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
The last games of the World Championship matches Topalov-Anand in Sofia and Carlsen-Anand in Sochi.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Making quick decisions, being creative.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Laziness and showing off.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Sometimes I try to find out which pen is the 'lucky' one during a tournament.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I would like to be a tennis player, but since there is no chance I would be a good one, it's not that bad that I'm in the chess business.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Roger Federer. He is my sports idol and seems to be such an interesting person I could invite him three times ☺.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?
Losing is just a part of the game. Forget and play the next round!

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Let me start with proper dancing and skiing. Also improving my Russian would be a good idea.

Where's your favourite place in the world?
As I recently got married, I should answer next to my wife ☺. More experienced husbands would tell me you should ask the same question 30 years from now!

What is your greatest fear?
That chess will be solved by computers.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
I would find an antidote to cheating.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
That the game can end with a draw. There should always be a winner; if not, we should play rapid, then blitz, etc.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
By probability, Chinese. By accident, Polish.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Not necessarily in everyday life, but I met my wife thanks to chess, so yes, sometimes it's useful ☺.

“Should be on your shopping list every three months”

–ChessCafe

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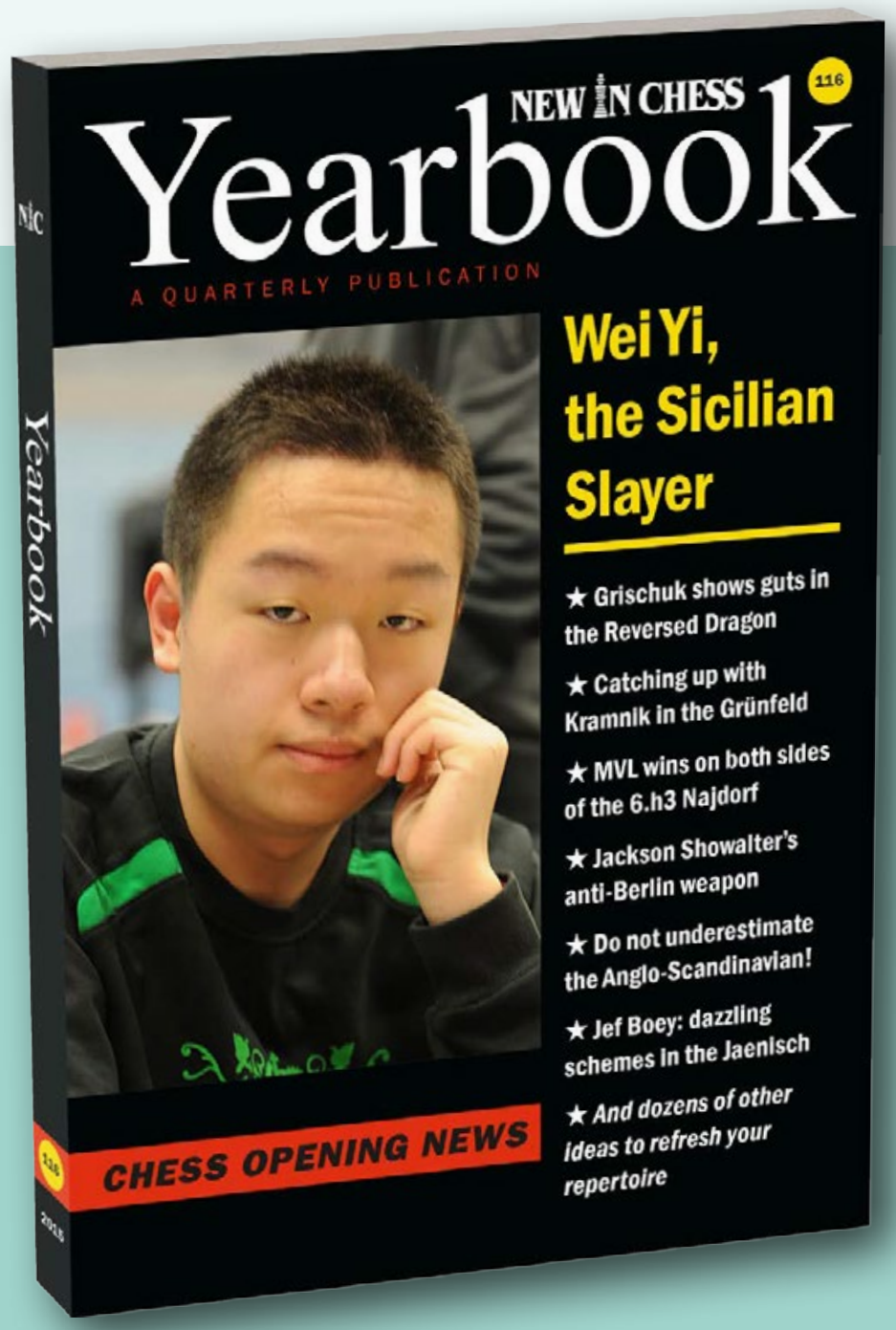
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